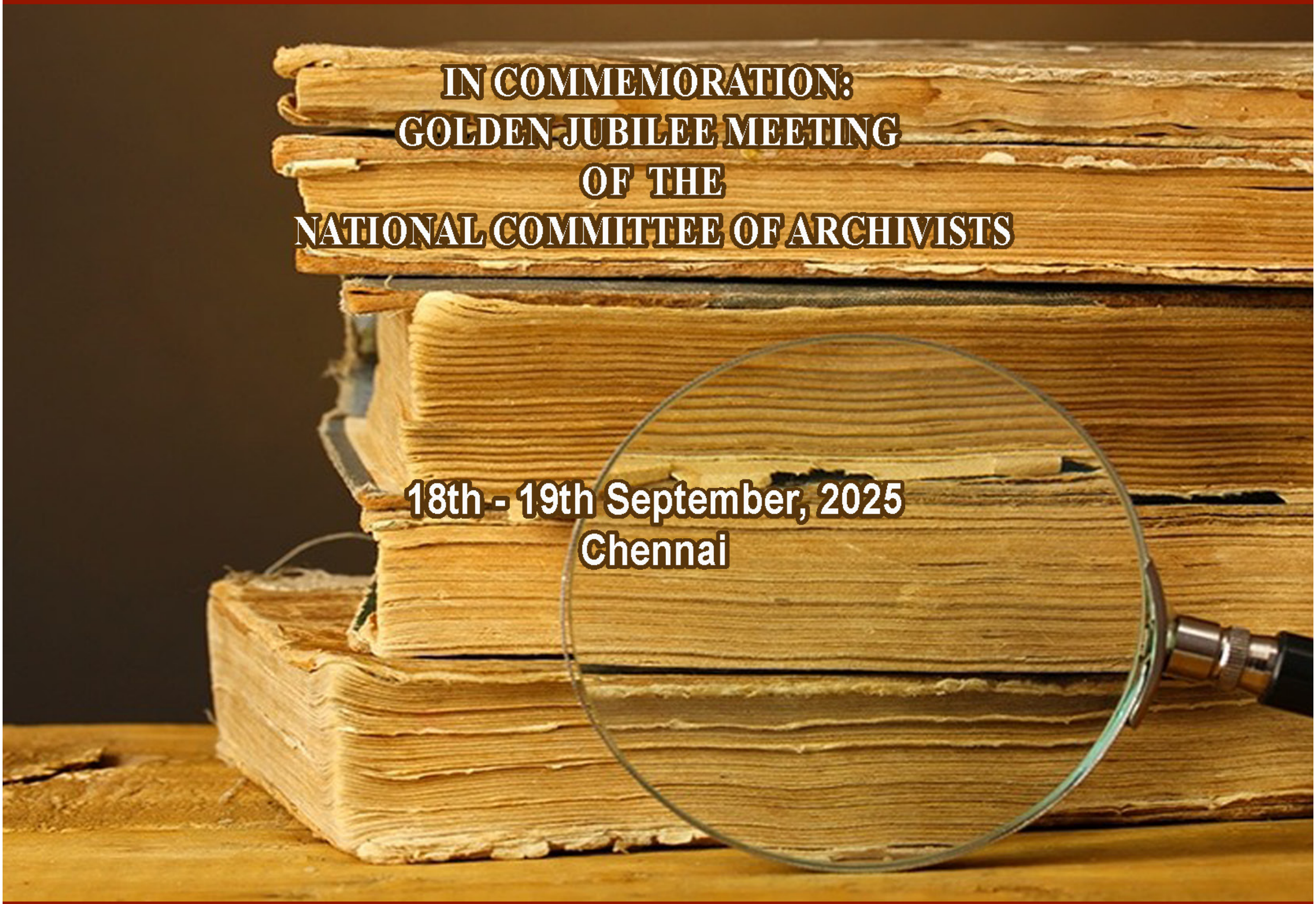
REVOLTS AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN TAMIL NADU AND SUPREME SACRIFICES PRIOR TO 1857



IN COMMEMORATION:
GOLDEN JUBILEE MEETING
OF THE
NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF ARCHIVISTS

18th - 19th September, 2025
Chennai

Published by
COMMISSIONER
TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH,
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
EGMORE, CHENNAI - 600 008.

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முனைவர் கோவி. செழியன்
உயர்கல்வித் துறை அமைச்சர்

தலைமைச் செயலகம்,
சென்னை 600 009.

அணிந்துரை

'1857-க்கு முன்னர் தமிழ்நாட்டில் பிரிட்டிஷ் ஆட்சிக்கு எதிரான கிளர்ச்சிகளும் உன்னதத் தியாகங்களும்' *(Revolts against British Rule in Tamil Nadu and Supreme Sacrifices Prior to 1857 A.D. "* மற்றும் நான்கு மைசூர் போர்களும் தமிழ்நாட்டினைக் கைப்பற்றலும் *(The Four Mysore Wars and the Conquests of Tamil Nadu)* ஆகிய நூல்களை வெளியிடுவதில் நான் மகிழ்ச்சியடைகிறேன். தேசிய ஆவணக் காப்பாளர்களின் குழுவின் பொன்விழா கூட்டத்தையொட்டி, தமிழ்நாடு ஆவணக் காப்பகம் மற்றும் வரலாற்று ஆராய்ச்சித்துறை இந்நூல்களை வெளியிடுவதிலும், இக்கூட்டத்தை தமிழ்நாட்டின் தலைநகராம், சென்னை மாநகரில் நடத்துவதிலும் எனக்குப் பெரும் மகிழ்ச்சி.

இந்நூல்கள் தென்னிந்திய ஆட்சியாளர்கள் ஆங்கிலேய கிழக்கு இந்திய கம்பெனிக்கு எதிராக நடத்திய போர்களையும் கிளர்ச்சிகளையும் ஆவணப்படுத்தி, அவர்கள் நாட்டிற்காகச் செய்த தியாகங்களையும் வெளிப்படுத்துகின்றன. பூலித்தேவர், வீரபாண்டிய கட்டபொம்மன், ஊமைத்துரை, மருது சகோதரர்கள், ஹைதர் அலி, திப்பு சுல்தான் ஆகியோரின் வீரச் செயல்களும் தியாகங்களும், தமிழ்நாடு ஆவணக் காப்பகத் துறையில் பாதுகாக்கப்பட்டுள்ள மூலச்சான்று ஆவணங்களின் மூலம் விளக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. நமது நாட்டின் சமூக, அரசியல், பொருளாதார மற்றும் பண்பாட்டு வரலாற்றைப் பாதுகாக்கவும் பதிவு செய்யவும் ஆவணக் காப்பாளர்களின் பங்கு இன்றியமையாதது.

இந்நூல்களை வெளியிடுவதில் பெரும் பங்காற்றிய முதன்மைச் செயலாளர் /ஆணையர் அவர்களுக்கும், ஆசிரியர் குழுவிற்கும் மற்றும் அனைத்து அலுவலர்களுக்கும் என் பாராட்டுகளைத் தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறேன்.

அன்புடன்...

நாள்: 16. 09. 2025.

(கோவி. செழியன்)

முனைவர் **பொ. சங்கர்** இ.ஆ.ப.
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வாழ்த்துச் செய்தி

தேசிய ஆவணக் காப்பாளர்கள் குழுவின் பொன்விழா கூட்டத்தை நடத்துவதற்கான வாய்ப்பைப் பெற்றிருப்பது உயர்கல்வித் துறை மற்றும் ஆவணக் காப்பகத் துறைக்குப் பெருமை அளிக்கிறது. ஆவணக் காப்பாளர்கள் ஆவணங்களைப் பாதுகாத்து அவற்றை அரசுத் துறைகளின் நிர்வாக நடவடிக்கைகளுக்குக் கிடைக்கச் செய்வதில் அத்தியாவசியப் பங்காற்றுகின்றனர். மேலும், ஆவணங்கள் வழியாக ஒரு நாட்டின் சமூகப் பொருளாதார அரசியல் வரலாற்றை வடிவமைப்பதிலும் அவர்கள் முக்கியப் பங்காற்றுகின்றனர்.

இந்தச் சிறப்பு நிகழ்ச்சியை முன்னிட்டு, ஆவணக் காப்பகம் மற்றும் வரலாற்று ஆராய்ச்சித்துறை இரண்டு நூல்களை வெளியிடுகிறது. அவை 1857க்கு முன்னர் தமிழ்நாட்டில் பிரிட்டிஷ் ஆட்சிக்கு எதிரான கிளர்ச்சிகளும் உன்னதத் தியாகங்களும்‘ *(Revolts against British Rule in Tamil Nadu and Supreme Sacrifices Prior to 1857 A.D.)* போர்களும் தமிழ்நாட்டினைக் கைப்பற்றலும் *(The Four Mysore Wars and the Conquests of Tamil Nadu)* ஆகும். இந்நூல்கள் பூலித்தேவர், வீரபாண்டிய கட்டபொம்மன், ஊமைத்துரை, மருது சகோதரர்கள், ராணி வேலுநாச்சியார். விருப்பாட்சி கோபால நாயக்கர், திப்பு சுல்தான், ஹைதர் அலி ஆகியோரின் தியாகங்களையும், மைசூர்ப் போர்களின் விரிவான விவரங்களையும் தென்னிந்திய வரலாற்றில் அவற்றின் தாக்கத்தையும் விளக்குகின்றன.

இந்நூல்களை வெளியிட உழைத்த ஆவணக் காப்பகத் துறை முதன்மைச் செயலாளர் / ஆணையர் அவர்களுக்கும் மற்றும் ஆவணக் காப்பக அலுவலர்கள் அனைவருக்கும் என் மனமார்ந்த பாராட்டுகள். இப்பொன்விழா கூட்டம் சிறப்பாக நடைபெற என் வாழ்த்துகள்.

16.09.25

(முனைவர் பொ. சங்கர்)

HAR SAHAY MEENA, I.A.S.
Principal Secretary/Commissioner
ஹர் சஹாய் மீனா, இ.ஆ.ப.,
முதன்மைச் செயலாளர் / ஆணையர்

Tamil Nadu Archives and
Historical Research Centre,
Department of Higher Education,
Government of Tamil Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

It is a great honour for the Tamil Nadu Archives and Historical Research, under the Department of Higher Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, to host the Golden Jubilee Meeting of the National Committee of Archivists, at Chennai.

The role of archivists in a democratic country is vital. They preserve records and make them available to the Government for the effective conduct of day-to-day administration. As archival records are the primary sources of contemporary history, archivists also guide researchers, students, and scholars by helping them identify the sources they require for their studies.

It is really a matter of immense pleasure that we are releasing books by incorporating the events of early revolts and rebellions of Tamil Nadu pertaining to the 18th Century, prior to the 1857 Mutiny, during two days meeting.

The first publication, titled *"Revolts against British Rule in Tamil Nadu and Supreme Sacrifices prior to 1857 A.D"* portrays the South Indian martyrs who had laid down their lives in the cause of our freedom.

The second publication, titled *"The Four Mysore Wars and the Conquests of Tamil Nadu,"* provides a detailed account of the decisive struggles fought by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan against the East India Company, highlighting their significance in the history of South India.

The events mentioned in these books are extracted from original contemporary archival records preserved in the Tamil Nadu Archives and Historical Research. These volumes document the sacrifices of early martyrs from Tamil Nadu, including Poolee Thevar, Veera Pandiya Kattabomman, Umaithurai, the Maruthu Brothers, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan and provide detailed accounts of the Mysore wars and their impact on South India. These books will be useful for historians, researchers and students as genuine and authentic references.

I wish to record my deep appreciation to the Editor and Assistant Editors of the Gazetteer Section, and the staff of the Archives for their hard work and cooperation in bringing out these books within short duration of time.

Chennai-600 008
16.09.2025

HAR SAHAY MEENA
16.9.25

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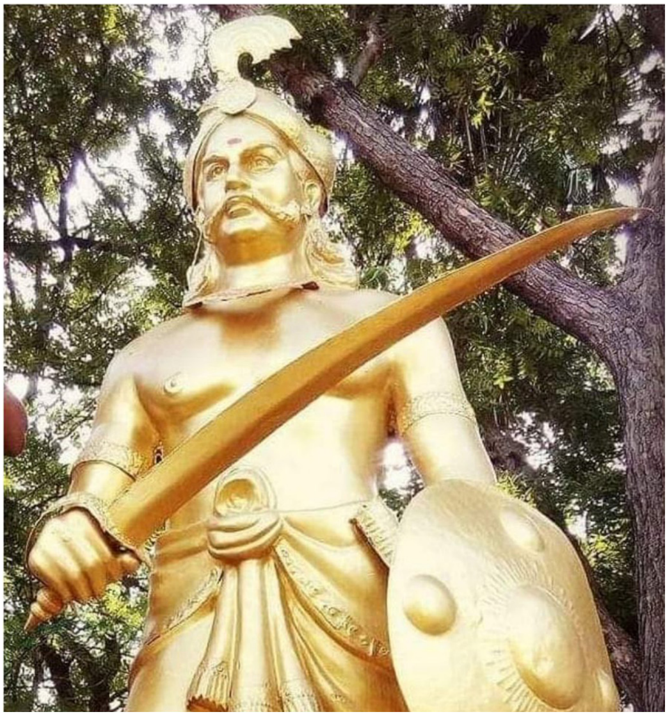
Tirunelveli in the Diocese of Madras



Poolee Thevar of Nerkattanseval

The Rebellion of Poolee Thevar of Nerkattanseval, Tirunelveli District – 1757 to 1761

About Polygars – An Introduction: [1]

The name Polygars, their Tamil name, palaiyakkaran, “holder of an armed camp”, sufficiently describes the basis on which the power of these chieftains rested. The services of the poligar were, in theory, at the disposal of the sovereign; and in return for his assistance he was allowed, subject to his rendering a tribute, to hold complete sway over a certain tract of country and to collect for his own use what revenues he could as it existed till 1910 no less than thirty-one such baronies. Of the modern district, practically the whole of the Sankaranainarkoil taluk, a great part of the Tenkasi and Ambasamudram taluks and more than half the modern Koilpatti taluk were under the control of these chieftains. The poligars of the Koilpatti country were almost all of the Tottiyan caste, owing their establishment, doubtless, to the favour or at least the acquiescence of their fellow-Telugus, who constituted the Nayakkan dynasty of Madura; prominent among them were the chieftains of Panjalankurichi and Ettaiyapuram. The western poligars, with the exception of Sivagiri and the unimportant Alagapuri, who were Vanniyans, belonged to the Marava caste; their leaders were the poligar of Nelkattanseval (always known as the Puli Tevan) and the poligar of Chokkampatti. Each chieftain was surrounded by a horde of armed retainers, mostly Maravans. By Orme and other writers of the period they are referred to as “Colleries,” a word denoting the caste of Kallans, or “Cullers.” Referring to the Marava “Colleries” of Tinnevelly, Orme says;

“The Colleries of this side [i.e., the west] of the Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli) country possess nothing of the ugliness or deformity which generally characterize the inhabitants of the hills and wilds of India. They are tall, well-made, and well-featured. Their arms are lances and pikes, bows and arrows, rockets and matchlocks, but whether with or without other weapons, every man constantly wears a sword and shield. In battle the different arms move in distinct bodies ; but the lancemen are rated the most eminent, and lead all attacks. This weapon is eighteen feet long. They tie under the point a tuft of scarlet horse-hair and when they attack horse, add a small bell. Without previous exercise, they assemble in a deep column, pressing close together, and advance at a long steady step, in some degree of time, their lances inclining forward, but aloft, of which the elasticity and vibration, with

1 Source: 1. Madras District Gazetteers - Tinnevelly – H.R. Pate, 1917, p. 71, 72.

Nasir Jung Nizam of Hyderabad

Muzaffar Jang to be Nawab of Arcot

the jingle and dazzle, scare the cavalry ; and their approach is scarcely less formidable to infantry not disciplined with fire-arms."

About Poolee Thevar:

Poolee Thevar, also known as Puli Thevar, was a pioneering figure in Tamil resistance against colonial and feudal domination during the mid-18th century. Born in 1715 in Nerkattumseval, he belonged to the Maravar warrior community and rose to prominence as the Poligar (feudal chieftain) of his native region. His defiance against the alliance of Nawab of Arcot and the British East India Company began around 1755, when he refused to pay tribute and rallied fellow Poligars into a confederacy of resistance. Poolee Thevar's military acumen allowed him to repel multiple invasions, including those led by Yusuf Khan (later Marudanayagam), a converted commander aligned with colonial forces. His fort at Nerkattumseval became a bastion of Tamil defiance, surviving sieges and symbolizing indigenous sovereignty. A devout Shaivite and scholar of Tamil literature, he infused his political struggle with spiritual conviction, composing hymns and invoking divine protection. Though eventually overwhelmed by superior forces, his legacy endured in folklore and historical memory. Poolee Thevar's resistance predates the 1857 Indian Rebellion by nearly a century, making him one of the earliest freedom fighters in South India and a revered icon of Tamil valor and autonomy.

The state of administration in Tirunelveli Region during 1750: [2]

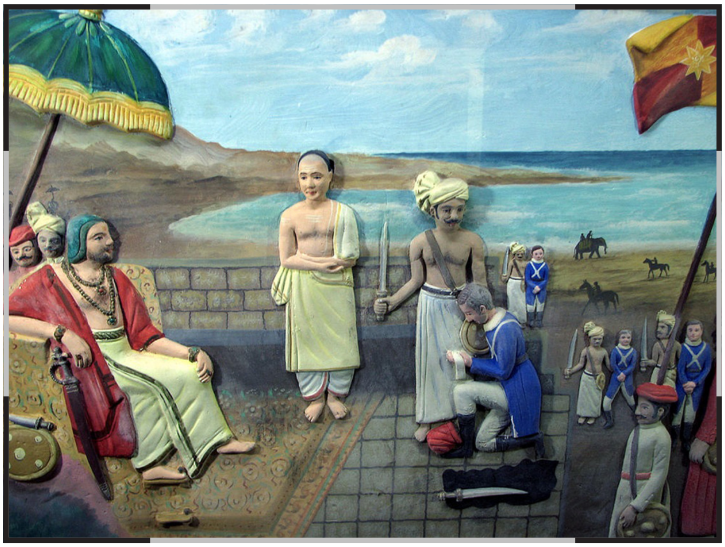
Since 1693 the Trichinopoly ruler had been nominally the feudatory of the emperor of Delhi ; and the Carnatic to the north of the Coleroon had been since 1698 under direct Muhammadan rule.

The local representative of the Moghul was the Nawab of Arcot, and an intermediate authoritywas held by the Nizam of Haidarabad, who was in theory the subordinate of the emperor and the superior of the Nawab. In 1734, when Minakshi and Vangaru Tirumalai of Madurai were fighting for the crown, an expedition was sent by Dost Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, to exact tribute and submission from the kingdoms of the south. The leaders were the Nawab's son, Safdar Ali Khan, and his nephew and confidential adviser, the well- known Chanda Sahib. Tanjore was taken by storm,' and, leaving the stronghold of Trichinopoly unattempted, the invaders swept across Madura and Tinnevelly into Travancore, carrying all before them.

On their return Vangaru approached Safdar Ali Khan with an offer of three million rupees if he would oust the queen in favour of himself. Unwilling to attack Trichinopoly,

2 Madras District Gazetteers - Tinnevelly – H.R. Pate, 1917, p. 68

Muhammad Ali Khan



Depiction at Padmanabhapuram Palace of
De Lannoy's Surrender at the Battle of Colachel

De lannoy Tomb

the Mussalman prince contented himself with declaring Vangaru Tirumalai to be king and taking a bond for the three millions. He then marched away, leaving Chanda Sahib to enforce his award as best he could. The queen approached Chanda Sahib with substantial offers and had little difficulty in persuading that facile politician to accept her bond for a crore of rupees and to declare her duly entitled to the throne. Vangaru Tirumalai was allowed to go off to Madura with permission to rule over that country and Tinnevelly. Chanda Sahib proceeded to Arcot and, returning two years later (1736), obtained admission to the fort and proceeded to make himself master of the kingdom.

He then turned against Vangaru Tirumalai, who was still ruling in the south, defeated him at Dindigul and Ammayanakkanur, compelled him to take refuge in Sivaganga, and occupied the southern provinces of the Trichinopoly kingdom. He imprisoned the queen and proclaimed himself ruler. The queen thereupon took poison ; and with her the dynasty of the Nayakkans of Madura came to an end.

Chanda Sahib's success was regarded with suspicion by the Nawab of Arcot; but family reasons prevented a rupture, and Chanda Sahib was left undisturbed while he strengthened the fortifications of Trichinopoly and placed his two brothers as governors in the strongholds of Dindigul and Madura.

In 1743 the Nizam marched south and established his authority in the Carnatic. He appointed Anwar-ud-din to be Nawab, and the whole of the Madura kingdom now fell under the rule of that potentate.

Anwar-ud-din, who derived his authority from the real Nizam, Nazir Jang, was defeated and killed in July 1749 at Ambur, and Chanda Sahib was appointed by Muzaffar Jang to be Nawab of Arcot. Anwar-ud-din's son, Muhammad Ali, fled to Trichinopoly and proclaimed himself Nawab ; and soon most of the south of India was involved in the struggle between these rivals. The French and the English took sides in the conflict, the former supporting Chanda Sahib and the latter Muhammad Ali, and from this time begins what was in effect a struggle between these two European nations for the mastery of the Carnatic.

Muhammad Ali's expedition in alliance with British to the south, 1751.

To make sure of the adhesion of the people of Tinnevelly, Muhammad Ali despatched to the district a force of a few thousand men, amongst whom was a small detachment of English under Lieutenant Innis. Abdul Rahim, however, who was appointed to the supreme command, encountered more difficulties in dealing with his own troops than in securing the allegiance of the inhabitants of the country. [3]

Causes for Heron's Expedition, 1755

The Arcot Nawabs though conquered the entire Nayak kingdom, the Palayakkars in the South did not send tributes to the Nawabs and instead tried to reinstate the Nayak rule in Madurai. For the consolidation of his position in the South Mohammed Ali sent an army under Col. Heron to the South in 1755. [4]

Taking the troubles in Carnatic and in Madurai, the Travancore king annexed Kalakkadu, a portion of Tirunelveli Seemai with his kingdom. The Palayakkars in Tirunelveli and Madurai did not pay tribute to Mohammed Ali. The Nawab also wanted to establish Wallajah rule in Madurai and Tirunelveli regions and hence, sent an expedition on 4th February 1755 under Col. Alexander Heron, Khan Sahib and Maphuz Khan, who commanded European, local and Wallajah forces respectively. [5]

The 1755 Clashes and Poolee Thevar : [6]

During this time, Pulithevar was the Palayakkar of Nerkattan Seval. He was exceptionally heroic and the first Palayakkar to take arms against the British in the South.

Finally, in 1755, the force consisting of 2,000 sepoys and 500 Europeans was equipped and placed under the command of Colonel Heron. An expedition was sent on 4th February 1755. Mahfuz Khan, the Nawab's (ally of the British) elder brother, was put in charge of the native troops. On 25th March 1755, the combined forces of Maphuz Khan and Heron marched from Madurai to Tirunelveli for the suppression of the rebellious palayakkars. [7] The army expelled the Nevayat troops in Tirunelveli and occupied their stronghold. The troops under Heron and others approached Madura. Madura fell without a blow; and the poligar of Ramnad signified his submission by surrendering to the Company two seaports on the coast opposite Ceylon. Heron then proceeded to capture Kovilgudi, a temple-fortress, in which the fugitive governor of Madura had taken refuge. Proceeding south, he took

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3 Madras District Gazetteers - Tinnevelly – H.R. Pate, 1917, p. 70.
4 Thoothukudi District Gazetteer, R. Sinnakani, Year 2007, p. 103.
5 Madras District Gazetteers - Tirunelveli – K.S.K. Velmani, 2002, p. 192.
6 Same, as above.
7 Muslim descendants from Arab immigrants (Mysoreans)

Tinnevelly without opposition; and renters, both in the capital and the surrounding country, gave in their submission. Many of the poligars (local chieftains) rejected the demands of tribute made in the name of the Nawab, chief among the recalcitrants being Kattaboma Nayakkan of Panjalankurichi. An attempt was made to reduce his strong hold but had to be abandoned, as the whole force was almost immediately recalled to Trichinopoly. A detachment of the force was sent to attack a fort called (by Orme) Nellikottah, the site of which Dr. Caldwell has identified with a place called Nattakottai, six miles to the east of the Aramboli lines. The capture of the place was attended with great savagery, almost the whole population, including women and children, being put to the sword. On his way back Colonel Heron made a diversion towards the fort of Nelkattanseval, the head-quarters of the Puli Tevan, the leading poligar of the Sankaranainarkoil country. The attempt proved a failure, and the force withdrew to Madura. The revenues collected by means of the expedition had not been sufficient to cover its expenses, and finally Colonel Heron was induced by a large present to allow Mahfuz Khan to rent the countries of Madura and Tinnevelly for the small sum of 15 lakhs of rupees. On his return to Madras Colonel Heron was tried by court martial on a charge of bribery and dismissed the service.[8] In the absence of heavy cannon, it was found impossible to make a practicable breach. The troop of Pulithevar by gallant sorties, repulsed the attack. As nothing could be accomplished, Heron and Maphuz Khan abandoned the siege and retreated in humiliation. The army not only failed in suppressing most of the principal palayakkars but suffered serious reverses at the hands of Pulithevar and the Maravars. [9]

Heron's expedition was not a success politically and economically. The Palayakars were undoubtedly subtle. Notwithstanding their internal feud, they united against the common enemy in taking advantage of the corrupt system. They administered bribes to the avarice of their enemy and procrastination to his passion for command but retained their military strength and political independence almost unassailed. The Palayakars removed their pondering incursions with increased vigour soon after the return of the army. The Palayakars now learned the techniques of facing with the British army. [10]

On Heron's departure the western poligars at once made up their minds to revolt. They were assisted by three Pathan soldiers of fortune who had been stationed in the southern countries as the representatives of Chanda Sahib. The king of Travancore, whose army had been trained under the famous Flemish officer De Lanoy, sent a force of 2,000 Nayars, who joined the united rebel forces at Kalakkad. Though Mahfuz Khan was defeated, the Travancore force returned home in haste, apparently smitten with fear of the cavalry of

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8 Madras District Gazetteers - Tinnevelly – H.R. Pate, 1917, p. 70, 71.

9 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer Vol.1, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, p.194

10 Thoothukudi District Gazetteer, R. Sinnakani, Year 2007, p. 103 & K. Rajayyan, History ofMadurai (1736-1801), Madurai University Historical Series I, 1 974,p. 158.)

Mahfuz Khan which was known to be approaching. The following year however they returned, and inflicted another defeat on Mahfuz Khan's troops.

Puli Tevan, the leader among the poligars of the west, now began to contemplate a union with his comrades of the east, the chief of whom was Kattaboma Nayakkan. Both he however and his vassal at Ettaiyapuram refused. The poligars of Madura, on the other hand, promised assistance, and a formidable league was now threatening. The confederates concentrated their efforts on Srivilliputtur, the main stronghold of the northern part of the district. Abdul Rahim, to whom Mahfuz Khan had deputed the charge of the country, was defeated ; the fort was taken and reduced. The united forces of the poligars now amounted to 25,000 men, of whom 1,000 were cavalry. Mahfuz Khan had meanwhile won over Kattaboma Nayakkan and the poligar of Ettaiyapuram, but relied mainly on his 1,500 cavalry and the sepoys, 1,000 in number, who were under the command of Jamanul Sahib. A battle took place seven miles to the north of Tinnevelly, which resulted in the defeat of Puli Tevan and his confederates. [11]

Year 1756:

It was well known in Madras that the object of this confederacy was nothing less than to get possession of Madura. The Company had, out of deference to the Nawab, so far treated Mahfuz Khan with indulgence, but were at the same time convinced of his untrustworthiness. Muhammad Yusuf was a commander who had already proved his ability in the service of the Company, and it was decided to send him immediately to the south. He arrived in May 1756 and with a mixed force, which included a detachment of European artillery, joined Mahfuz Khan at Kayattar. Owing to the devastation caused by the previous campaigns both commanders found themselves unable to collect sufficient money to maintain their troops. In spite of difficulties, however, the combined forces proceeded to Srivilliputtur, recaptured the fort and received the submission of most of the poligars, including Puli Tevan himself.

Maphuz Khan granted certain villages to the Palayakkars of Ettayapuram and Panjalamkurichi and won over their co-operation. With their active support, Maphuz Khan droused away the Travancore king from Kalakadu. In March 1756, the ill-equipped rebels numbering about 20,000 assembled near Tirunelveli. On 21 March, a hard battle took place in which Maphuz Khan defeated the rebel force and killed their chief Miana. Though it was a considerable victory, he found it impossible to settle the country or to subdue the Palayakkars.[12]

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11 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p.195

12 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p.195

Leaving a strong garrison in Srivilliputtur to overawe the poligars of the west, Muhammad Yusuf started for Tinnevelly, where he found that the Nawab had handed over to a Hindu, named Alagarappa Mudaliyar, the management of the Tinnevelly district, for a yearly rental of eleven lakhs ; in return for this payment the renter was to possess the usual plenary powers, civil and criminal. Mahfuz Khan’s agent, Mir Jaffar, was still on the spot, and friction inevitably arose.

Rebellion of Maphuz Khan

Maphuz Khan looked at Khan Sahib with suspicion. He did not like to tolerate the presence of the Company troops inside the Madurai fort and Khan Sahib's direct dealing with the Palayakkars. Maphuz Khan came to Madurai and expelled the Company's troops left there by Khan Sahib. Arcot Nawab Mohammad Ali also resented Khan Sahib's interference in the administration of Madurai and Tirunelveli.

Maphuz Khan, with the support of Patan chiefs in Madurai, Barkataula, and Nabi Khan Kattack declared himself the Governor of Madurai. Nabhi Khan Kattack, appealed for the help of Hyder Ali, who as the general was then guarding Dindigul. Reva Sahib, the son of Chanda Sahib was also approached for help by the rebels. After assuming himself as the Governor of Madurai, Maphuz Khan issued orders appointing Barkataula as his deputy for Nadumandalam and Mir Jafar for Tirunelveli. [13]

The Mudaliyar rashly turned to the Puli Tevan and his friends for help, and at the same time sought and obtained reconciliation with Mahfuz Khan. Muhammad Yusuf Khan demanded from the Mudaliyar payment for the Nawab's sepoys and, being refused, confined him to jail. The allies mustered in force and plundered the town of Tinnevelly ; the Mudaliyar regained his liberty and, occupying the fort of Palamcotta (which even at that date was in a ruined condition), managed to defy the musketry attacks of the sepoys. Muhammad Yusuf (who had meanwhile been recalled to Madura) hurried to the scene and, meeting a large force of the allies at Gangaikondan, inflicted a severe defeat.

Far from being disheartened, the confederates took the bold step of negotiating with the Mysoreans, who were then before Dindigul. The position of the English looked serious ; and, as the vital necessity of securing Madura was realized, Muhammad Yusuf was sent there with troops. No sooner had he left the district than Mahfuz Khan, who had been at Madura in negotiation with the rebels in the town, saw his opportunity, hurried back to Nelkattanseval, and took the field once more with the Puli Tevan and his allies.

A proclamation was issued announcing Mahfuz Khan as the Nawab's renter; and negotiations were opened with the Travancore sovereign for the surrender to that ruler of Kalakkad and its neighbourhood. The town of Tinnevelly was taken and Palamcotta besieged ; the defenders made a sally and, with the aid of the poligars of Ettaiyapuram and Panjalankurichi, obliged the enemy to retire.

On 23 February, 1757, Lord Pigot sent an army under John Caillaud to put down the rebellion in the south and restore order. On the way, the army of Pudukkottai Raja also

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13 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p.196 & 197.

joined with the company troops and the combined army marched towards Tirunelveli. The Kallars sealed the direct route to Tirunelveli and so, the forces took a circular path enroute Ramanathapuram. On the rebel's side, there seemed a crumbling of cooperation as they sensed insecurity to them. Many rebels wanted peace and some to fight out the issue. Caillaud had spread a rumour that he had fought Maphuz Khan. The Caillaud forces reached Tirunelveli on 17 March where it joined the forces of Yusuf Khan and Tartarappa.

Caillaud spent a few days at Tirunelveli regulating the affairs of the province. He did not make any serious attempts to dislodge the rebels from Tenkasi, Uthamalai or Wadagara. The shortage of food materials and the onset of monsoon hampered the progress of his operations. Pulithevar and Barakataula urged Hyder Ali to rush his troops for which they offered to pay five lakh of rupees and to cede the strategic fort of Sholavandan, which commanded the high way from Tiruchirappalli to Madurai.

Caillaud and Khan Sahib withdrew their forces from Tirunelveli to Madurai. The rebels also advanced their forces to Madurai to prevent Madurai from falling into the hands of their enemies. On the way, the forces were dispersed by the Sivagiri Palayakkar for trespass into his palayam. However, the forces re-assembled and marched towards Madurai. Caillaud, however, could not capture the fort of Madurai. Therefore, he retreated to Tiruchirappalli.

Though Caillaud re-treated to Tiruchirappalli, the rebel depredations in Tirunelveli and the military operations against the rebels of Madurai continued. Maphuz Khan and Pulithevar recovered the lost posts but, their attempts to storm the fort of Tirunelveli failed. Maphuz Khan was not able to win any decisive victory.

The rule of the rebel palayakkars continued in the south until there were differences of opinion among the chieftains. Captain Caillaud and Khan Sahib succeeded in winning the support of a few rebels to their side. They included the MaravarsMudemiah and the palayakkars of Settur. The palayakkars of Ettayapuram, Panchalamkurichi and Sivagiri were already the supporters of Tartarappa and Khan Sahib. Kattabomman furnished 1000 troops for service with Khan Sahib, while Mudemiah brought with him the Kallars of Natham. These defections considerably weakened the rebels. However, Pulithevar, Barkataula and Nabi Khan Kattack remained with Maphuz Khan in firm alliance.

Hyder Ali championing the cause of the rebels invaded Madurai in 1757. Khan Saheb rushed with his force to Madurai to check Hyder's invasion. As Khan Saheb was away from Tirunelveli there were no strong forces either of the Nawab or of the Company in Tirunelveli. Taking advantage of this situation the palayakkars of Nelkattumsevval, Wadagara, Settur and Ettayapuram took the head in gaining possession of circar villages.

They even made ravages into the territories of the neutral loyal palayakkars and occupied Uthumalai. The further depredation of the palayakkars received a check with the return of the forces of Khan Saheb to Tirunelveli after the withdrawal of Hyder Ali from Madurai.

Khan Saheb came to Madras to assist the British to lift the siege of Madras by the French General Lally. His absence was a blessing for Maphuz Khan and the palayakkars to expand their territories. In 1 759, Khan Saheb was sent to Madurai as the Governor with the approval of the Nawab. He found that Maphuz khan and the Palayakkars had occupied all the territories from Madurai to Travancore. HoweverPalayamkottai and Madurai remained with the forces of the Nawab and the Company. Maphuz Khan declared himself the Nawab of Madurai. His chief associates by the time were Pulithevar, Kattabomman and the palayakkars of Ettayapuram. In the earlier operation, Kattabomman and the Ettayapurampalayakkars were either neutral or supported Khan Saheb. Now they became allies to MaphuzKhan.[14]

Muhammad Yusuf returns and is again recalled, 1758

Muhammad Yusuf returned once more to the district to find a strong conspiracy formed against him by Mahfuz Khan and the western poligars ; the Travancore troops were in possession of Kalakkad ; many towns in the Ambasamudram and Srivaikuntam taluks had become strongholds of the con federates, and Palamcotta itself was threatened. Muhammad Yusuf was beginning to make some progress, when he was suddenly called away to Madras, then being closely besieged by the French.

The crisis appeared to Puli Tevan to be his opportunity. Relying on the expectation of French assistance, he succeeded in effecting a momentary alliance between the two leagues of poligars, the eastern and the western, a task rendered easier by the fact that Kattaboma Nayakkan, the leader of the eastern section and a supporter of Muhammad Yusuf, had just died. His successor declared himself from the outset an enemy of the English.

Muhammad Yusuf returns to find eastern and western poligars united, 1759

Such was the situation which Muhammad Yusuf found on his next return in 1759. His first efforts were directed towards the disruption of this confederacy and the restoration of the old antagonism between the east and the west. Kollan kondan, a fort near Srivilliputtur under the Puli Tevan's occupation, was captured ; Kolarpatti, the stronghold of an eastern poligar, was next attacked and after some resistance overpowered and razed to the ground. The Uttumalai poligar, controlling the country to the north-west of Tinnevelly, who had hitherto shown little activity, was reduced to submission and his fort of Surandai occupied.

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14 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p. 201

From Kalakkad to Cape Comorin the Travancore troops were plundering the country, and in his anxiety to reduce the poligars Muhammad Yasuf took the invaders into alliance. Vadagarai, the original stronghold of the poligar of Chokkampatti, not far from Shencotta, was captured, and the poligar fled to his neighbour the Puli Tevan for refuge. The Puli Tevan, however, was equal to the situation. The news of a battle at Wandiwash had already reached Mahfuz Khan, and the current version obtained from French sources was that the English had been defeated. Travancore wanted the district of Kalakkad, and Mahfuz Khan promised to secure it for him, provided Travancore would join the confederates. The situation was explained to Muhammad Yusuf, who, disappointed in his Expectation of guns and ammunition consigned for his use to Tuticorin and recognizing the overwhelming superiority of the newly threatened alliance, decided to secure the adherence of the ruler of Travancore by offering him Kalakkad and its neighbourhood. The bargain was accepted, and the Madras Government approved Muhammad Yousuf's action.

Aided by the Travancore troops, Muhammad Yusuf, who by now had received ammunition from Anjengo, proceeded to attack Vasudevanallur, one of the outlying strongholds of the Puli Tevan. The fort, though of mud, was exceptionally strong and, situated as it was only three miles from the foot of the ghats, was closely protected on the west and south by low hills and jungle. The position was considered by the poligars to be of first importance, and an immense army of "colleries" rallied to its defence. Muhammad Yusuf turned his 18-pounder against the defences; it did some damage but burst after a day's firing. A storm was attempted, when instantly the Puli Tevan, issuing from Nelkattanseval in the rear, fell upon Muhammad Yusuf's camp. The garrison was exultant, but Muhammad Yusuf continued the attack in the face of fire from the fort and the surrounding forest. The position became more and more hopeless, and before evening Yusuf decided to retire.

On the 6 of November 1759, Khan Saheb supported by the Travancore forces invaded Nelkattum sevval. Khan Saheb also received further supporting forces from Travancore and the Maravars. The combined forces sieged Vasudevanallur. Pulithevar and local inhabitants came to the rescue of Vasudevanallur. In the fierce battle that ensued, Pulithevar fought gallantly, but, both sides suffered heavy losses. Pulithevar lost 350 men and Khan Saheb 200. At this critical juncture a heavy cannon of the company burst and the war material in Khan Saheb's camp exhausted. The invaders retreated and Pulithevar won the day's battle. It was due to the sheer gallantry of the palayakkars that they humbled the formidable forces of their enemy. Thus another endeavour of Khan Saheb to suppress the western palayakkars ended in fiasco.

In July 1759, when Khan Saheb was continuing his military operations Maphuz

Khan sent messages to Lord Pigot conveying his desire to enter into a settlement with his brother. He communicated his idea of evacuating Madurai in favour of Yusuf Khan also. The conditions for his withdrawal were ceding a district to him for his support, granting of Ambasamudram and Rangasamudram to Pulithevar and recognition of Wadagara as a Palayam. The Nawab accepted his personal demand but refused any concession to the palayakkars. Khan Saheb intervened and brought about a settlement. In March, 1760, Maphuz Khan left the camp of Pulithevar and on the 14th April, he arrived at Tiruchirappalli. He then proceeded to Madras where he joined his brother though he could not get the specific concession as promised by his brother. [15]

Defence of Puli Thevar, Year 1760 [16]

In December 1760, Khan Saheb began his operations against the western Palayakkars. On 19 December, he entrenched himself within three miles of Nelkattansevval. The next day Pulithevar attacked the forces of Khan Saheb but withdrew as hundreds of his men fell in the battle. Khan Saheb continued the siege for about four months. When further forces arrived in April 1761, Khan Saheb moved the trenches close to the walls of the fort. He captured a hill from the summit of which one could have a clear view of the fort. This was a disadvantage to Pulithevar. Khan Saheb posted batteries on hill tops and charged the fort with cannon for several days without interruption. He curbed the communication of the fort with outside and made the garrison inside immobile. On 16th May 1761, his forts were captured. Available records indicate that Poolee Tevar went inside the Maravar's country thereafter. * [17]

Soon after this discomfiture, the rebels evacuated the other strongholds of Panagaur and Vasudevanallur. Khan Saheb magnanimously permitted his gallant enemy to escape to the woods of Ramanathapuram. Khan Saheb suppressed the other palayakkars. He demolished 29 mud forts and garrisoned 45 other forts with his troops. The success of the operations restored order in the land. Shrewd strategy of Yusuf Khan and the non-cooperation between the hostile palayakkars and among the anti-British groups enabled the governor of Madurai to disperse the two hostile coalitions and to expel the Mysoreans. His task was rendered easy as none of the rebel powers with the exception of Pulithevar decided on a determined resistance. The net result was that Pulithevar a determined and gallant chief had to bear the brunt, went down fighting.

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15 Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p. 202 & 203.

16 Extracts from Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p.204 & 205

17 Source: Tamil Nadu Archives, Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, p. 58, "Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoff Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 25th May, advising of the surrender of the Forts Naetacheval, Wasanallore and Panagoor on the 16th instant and of Poolee Taver's going away to the Moravar's country"

Pulithevar - An Estimate [18]

Though humiliated and humbled ultimately, Pulithevar remains one of the illustrious figures in the chequered history of palayakkars. The vivacity of his character gave him an ascendancy over the western palayakkars, while his determined resistance to the Nawab's overlordship made him a potential enemy of the Wallajahs. He was in fact the principal architect of the coalition of the palayakkars organised against the Nawab. Despite his command of slender resources and an irregular army, he never hesitated to fight a powerful enemy. His cool strategy was as remarkable as his daring gallantry he displayed in fighting the large columns of armed forces. The last defence of Nelkattumsevval for five months, was in keeping with his valour, but, its collapse was inevitable because of the overwhelming odds he had to face and due to the perseverance of an equally gallant general Khan Saheb. The victory of Khan Saheb which led to the crushing of the palayakkars resistance, was one of his exemplary achievements. The Nawab acknowledged his victory by presenting him with a gold plate and sword. Pulithevar may be regarded as the first south Indian ruler who sowed seed by his gallant resistance to expell the foreigners from the soil. His services to the nation is honoured in many respects and the Government of Tamil Nadu has erected a memorial for him in Nelkattumsevval where there is the remnents of his palace.

18 Extracts from Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, K.S.K. Velmani, Year 2002, Vol. 1, p.205.

Details of records available in the Tamil Nadu Archives narrating the sequence of events about the activities of Poolee Thevar of Nerkattanseval

Sl. No.	Reference	Press List Year, Number and Date	Gist of the Record
1	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VII, pp.366-367.	Year 1759. No.7160, Dt. 30.11.1759.	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoff Cawn, to the Governor, of Fort St. George, regarding his having put down Poolee Taver - and his intention to take Neetucheval and Wasoonellore, his only two remaining places, soon.
2	Mily. Country Correspodence., Vol. VIII, pp. 45-46.	Year 1760. No.50, Dt. 01.12.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, reporting that he is making preparations for war, requesting to the supplied with four cannon, stating that he intends to besiege the gady of Wasoonellore and punish Poolee Taver, that he has sent away the Maleavar's troops and that he will remit the kist in fanams.
3	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 42-43.	Year 1760. No.95, Dt. 24.01.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn to the Governor of Fort St. George, informing of an engagement with Poolee Taver while attempting to storm the gady of Wasoonellore, that he is in want of an 18-pounder and military stores, that he intends proceeding to Tinnevelly from whence he will remit money on account of the first kist to Trichinopoly, and that the letter to the King of Travancore will be forwarded.
4	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 59-60.	Year 1760. No.166, Dt. 07.02.1760	Copy of letter from the Nabob, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 9th February, informing that Mahaphooz Cawn has separated from Poolee Taver and requesting that Mahomed Usoof Cawn may be directed to send him to join the Nabob at Trichinopoly so as to keep him out of mischief.

5	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 81-82.	Year 1760. No.254, Dt. 03.03.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 3rd March, congratulating the Governor on the victory of Wandiwash, requesting to be supplied with arms and ammunition to enable him to punish Poolee Taver - informing that the money due on the first kist has been remitted to Madras, and suggesting that a bill be drawn on him for the remainder of the amount due.
6	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 167-168.	Year 1760. No.489, Dt. 0.05.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 11th May, stating that he is making every endeavour to supply the army with cattle, requesting that a Sowear may be sent to carry on the Mint businees, and that the guns and military stoers asked for may be sent quickly to enable him to punish Poolee Taver, and expressing willingness to meet bills drawn in favour of Sowears for the amount of the kist.
7	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 255-256.	Year 1760. No.737, Dt. 1.07.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 1st August, regarding his remittances to the Paymaster at Trichinopoly and attempts to procure pagodas and rupees for the same, reporting that his troops are plundering the Mysore districts near Dindigul, and suggesting that orders be issued to the Poligars to give their assistance in the expedition, and requesting that orders be sent to the Chief at Karical to send the great guns and shots to Negapatam to be removed from there to enable him to complete his punishment of Poolee Taver.
8	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 336-337.	Year 1760. No.1059, Dt. 4.10.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 15th October, informing of an engagement with Poolee Taver, his much to Wootamala in order to punish Poolee Taver, and the march of the Mysoreans to the relief of Dindigul.
9	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, pp. 338-339.	Year 1760. No.1061, Dt. 4.10.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 17th October, regarding his battles with Poolee Taver, provision made on account of the payment of the first kist, unauthorised claim of the Nabob to payment on account of the kist, message from Nauze Raza requesting the aid of the Company to reestablish himself in Syringapatam, objections to the terms of the last year's cowle, discharge of the accounts of the year before last, and non-delivery of receipt by Captain R. Smith on account of the first kist of the last year.

10	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. VIII, p. 348.	Year 1760. No.1090, Dt. 3.10.1760	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor, received 23rd October, advising that the Poligar of Woorampala belonging to Dindigal submitted himself to his Sardar on that side, that two elephants in that Palam have been sent to the Nabob's lady in Trichinopoly, and that engagements are daily on foot with Poolee Taver who will soon be purnished.
11	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, p. 26.	Year 1761. No.1417, Dt. 6.02.1761	Copy of letter from Muhammad Usoff Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, requesting to be supplied with lead, powder, some pounders out of the stores of Pondicherry, as also with some Coffrees and gunners to enable him to extirpate Poolee Taver entirely & c.,
12	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, pp. 42-43.	Year 1761. No.1623, Dt. 3.03.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, relating to his battering the Fort of Poolee Taver with 18 pounders and the prospect of taking it very soon, &c.
13	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, pp. 49-50.	Year 1761. No.1668, Dt. 11.04.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 22nd April, relating to : advice from Major More by letter from Anjengo of his intentions to march to Madras after visiting him on his way and the progress he has made in the attack upon Poolee Taver's gady.
14	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, p. 53.	Year 1761. No.1672, Dt. 1.04.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 2nd May, relating to : the discharge to be granted to him for phasli 1168 and the receipts for the rents of phasli 1169 - recution of Poolee Taver's fort - his sending a party of sepoys, kallaries, &c., as far as Nattam to meet Captain Smith proceeding from Trichinopoly towards those parts - departure of Major More from Tinnevelly for Trichinopoly.
15	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, pp. 56-57.	Year 1761. No.1729, Dt. 0.04.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoff Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 17th May, advising of the arrival of Coun-cillor Smith and Mr. Newton at Nactacheval via Madura and of their return to Trichinopoly after viewing the trenches, &c., before Poolee Taver's fort.

16	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, p. 58.	Year 1761. No.1775, Dt. 7.05.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoff Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 25th May, advising of the surrender of the Forts Naetacheval, Wasanallore and Panagoor on the 16th instant and of Poolee Taver's going away to the Moravar's country, &c.
17	Mily. Cons., Vol. XIV, pp. 301-310.	Year 1761. No.1813, Dt. 28.05.1761	Minutes of Consultation perusing letters : from Colonel Caillaud reporting the removal of the garrison at Pondicherry to their quarters of Cantonment at Tripapilore and Bandipollam - from Mr. DuPre regarding the removal of the French prisoners to Wandiwash, Chingleput and Carangoly - and from the same officer sending some stores by the Adventure and Phoenix - resolving to send copies of the letter received from the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors regarding the expediency of attacking the French islands to Bengal and Bombay - to approve and soon carry into effect the proposals of Colonel Calliaud for regulating the establishment of the Company's military - to order Captain Elliott at Nellore to Madras - to sell away the grains at the several out-garrisons - noting receipt of letter from Usoof Cawn regarding the reduction of Poolee Taver's forts - and despatching letters - to Major Preston directing him not to assist the Nabob or any other native ruler with troops with out the Board's permission - and to the Governor and Council, Fort William, sending them copy of letter from the Court of Directors regarding the attack of the French islands.
18	Mily. Country Correspondence, Vol. IX, pp. 80-81.	Year 1761. No.1958, Dt. 12.06.1761	Copy of letter from Mahomed Usoof Cawn, to the Governor of Fort St. George, received 14th July, relating to : his running into debt owing to the expedition against Poolee Taver, and other causes, with a request that the next year's rent may be so settled to enable him to clear his debt, &c.

Marudhu Brothers

Velu Natchiyar

Oomaithurai

The Marudhu Brothers' Revolt at Sivaganga. [19]

When the Poligar risings convulsed Tinnelveli and the neighbouring areas, Ramanathapuram was also affected. The Company forces that were despatched under Col. Smith to reduce Ramanathapuram in 1772, marched towards Sivaganga after reducing Ramanathapuram. The ruler of Sivaganga at this period was Muthu Vaduganathar. Having received a fore warning about the Company's scheme, Vaduganatha prepared for the defence of Kalaiyarkoil headquarters. In his efforts he was ably assisted by the Marudhu brothers, Peria Marudhu and Chinna Marudhu. The Company's forces were further augmented by the forces sent by Tondaiman. The defenders heroically withstood the attack. The battle that ensued was made notable by the role played by Velu Nachiar, wife of Vaduganatha. She came out into the front and gallantly played the role of a defender. The company forces soon overpowered the Sivaganga forces. Vaduganatha lost his life in the struggle.

Evading capture, the Marudhu brothers and Velu Nachiar fled to Dindigul where Hyder Ali received them warmly and gave them asylum. The Nawab annoyed at this alliance allowed the Marudhu brothers and the queen to return to Sivaganga and rule on condition of regular payment of revenue. The queen, however, passed on the sovereignty of the country to the two brothers in 1780. In the year 1783, the Company despatched a force under Col. Fullarton in order to extract the arrears of revenue. The Marudhu brothers, avoiding an open engagement with the formidable force, took to the woods with 10,000 of their men. Col. Fullarton demanded Rs, 90,000 as indemnity in addition to the arrears and threatened to storm the fort and ravage the country at the non-compliance of the condition. The Marudhus were able to collect 40,000 rupees and promising to pay the rest of the amount later, bought off the Company's forces.

Soon the Marudhu brothers were able to clear off their debt to the Company. From 1783 to 1801 they ruled the country - peacefully and devoted their time and money to works of art and social welfare. Chinna Marudhu (the younger Marudhu) was in charge of the administration and soon brought prosperity and peace to the country. The numerous temples and other endowment works carried out by these two brothers speak for the wealth of the country during their period and to their lofty motives. Many public works like tanks, and wells are still attributed to them. Many of the temples built or patronised by them still house their statues and bear their inscriptions. The works of the native bards eulogising the Marudhus have come down to us in the form of ballads and are still current in Ramanathapuram.

19 Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers, Ramanathapuram, Dr. A. Ramaswami, 1972, p. 100-103.

Muthu Vaduganathar

Gopal Naicker

Colonel Fullarton

Adjutant General Patrick Alexander Agnew

In 1801 the long years of peace was disturbed violently. Oomaithurai and his adherents, after evacuating the Panjalankurichi fort took refuge in Sivaganga. At once the Marudhu brothers agreed to help them. On this, the relationship between the Marudhu brothers and the Company, worsened. Lushington also demanded to produce the documents which entitled the Marudhu brothers to the throne of Sivaganga. The Marudhu brothers had been maintaining very cordial relations with the Panjalankurichi poligar, and Lushington got acquainted with the correspondence that went on between the two. Though Lushington saw the hand of Marudhus in the poligar risings he thought it wiser to deal with the poligars one by one. And Oomaithurai's refuge at Sivaganga, offered the Company a splendid opportunity to deal with the two refractory poligars .

Five days after the fall of Panjalankurichi on 28th May 1801, the forces of the Company mustered at Nagalapuram under the command of Major Shepherd. This force was soon joined by another detatchment under Major Grey. The forces of Sivaganga were by this time in full military preparedness. It captured the strong fort at Kamudi, belonging, to Ramanathapuram and controlled by the Company. But the fort was soon recaptured by the Company's forces. Designing to attack Sivaganga the Company forces marched towards Tiruppachetti after an indecisive engagement with the forces at Tiruppuvanam. The forces of Marudhus hanging over the flanks of the Company forces throughout their march indulged in snapping. Major Grey fell a victim and a number of officers were seriously injured. Harried by the guerilla tactics of the Sivaganga army, the Company's forces camped at Ramanathapuram where Col. Agnew joined them. Another detachment of the company's forces from Natham joined Agnew's after an engagement with the Sivaganga forces.

By this time the Marudhus had mustered all their strength which consisted of 20,000 men armed with muskets, matchlocks, pikes and other weapons. Agnew, feeling inadequately equipped to fight the Sivaganga forces, asked the Tondaiman for help. Captain Blackburn met the Tondaiman and persuaded him to send a force of 3,500 men under Muthukumara Pillai. Another force of 2,000 was sent from Pudukkottai under the command of Kannavian and Ragunatha Rao.

Agnew was also busy sowing seeds of division among the rebel camp. He met Gowri Vallabha, an adopted son of Velu Nachiar, the dowager queen of Sivaganga, and succeeded in weaning away numerous adherents of the Marudhus.

The combined armies moved towards Siruvayal, a stronghold of the Marudhus. The company's forces had to face the spasmodic and sudden attacks of Sivaganga forces while travelling through the thick woods. Siruvayal was gallently defended and the Company's

forces, consisting of 350 English officers, had to exert all their strength. Ultimately the town fell and when the Company's forces entered it, they found it desolate. Following a scorched earth policy the insurgents had set fire to the town. Then the whole force proceeded towards Kalaiyarkoil, the citadel of the insurgents.

The Marudhu forces were attacking the Company's forces in other fields also. The Tiruppattur Fort fell to the attack of the insurgents, and for a while even Ramanathapuram was threatened. At the same time the Marudhu forces carried on a naval war, though on a small scale, in the Palk straits. Marudhu ordered a number of dhonies (small country vessels) to seize all the dhonies of the company carrying rice. The cargo thus got was sent to Sivaganga. Lushmgton ordered the master attendant of Pamban to take effective measures against Sivaganga sea-farers. Thereupon the master attendant improvised a superior naval-force and succeeded in capturing and destroying the dhonies of the insurgents.

The approach to Kalaiyarkoil was barred by a strength of a thick jungle. The Company's force toiled for 4 days in an attempt to cut their way through the woods, while the Marudhu forces subjected them to constant fire. The insurgents successfully cut the communication lines of the Company's forces. Col. Agnew decided to abandon that approach and withdrew.

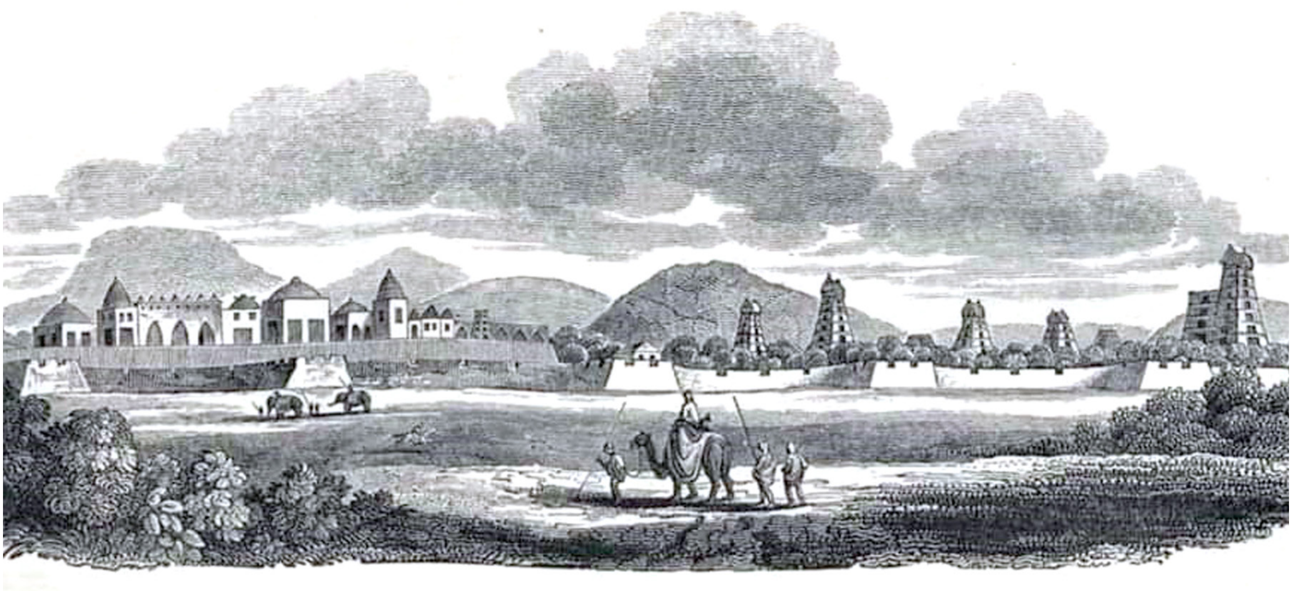
The Company's forces captured Piranmalai, a fort of the Marudhus. Then Col. Agnew, drew up a plan for a three pronged attack on Kalaiyarkoil. Col. Innes, Col. Agnew and Col. Spray attacked Kalaiyarkoil from different directions. Unable to withstand the attack, the fort fell in the hands of the Company's forces on 1st October, 1801. From that day onwards the insurgents abandoned all resistance as it was realised to be hopeless. The rest of the story is briefly told. The Marudhus, Oommaithurai and their associates were taken prisoners and were hanged. Other associates (70) in number were transported to Prince of Wales Island.

The subjugation of Sivaganga marked the end of the poligar wars, that were going on for nearly half a century. Lushington, Collector of Tirunelveli proceeded to effect a "settlement" of the country subjugated, which included Dindigul, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga and Madurai. All the palayams were grouped into zamindari, and the poligars were deprived of their ruling powers and reduced to the position of Zamindars. All the fire arms and other weapons of war were confiscated. The company installed Gowri Vallabah Peria Udaya Thevar as the zamindar of Sivaganga.

Ramanathapuram was also converted into a Zamindari in 1803 and the East India Company deputed Parishes to inform the Queen Mangaleswari Nachiar, the terms of the transfer and of the relationship between the Zamindari and the East India Company. The

Stephen Rumbold Lushington

Queen accepted her position and the revenue was fixed at Rs.3,24,404. Parishes in his despatches wrote, “In order that she might fully comprehend the benefit, which the execution of this system would confer on her, I explained the principles of the new arrangements in the fullest manner by stating that her country would be secured to her under a Sunnad beyond the power of any person to take any part of it from her. The assessment she was to pay was fixed for ever and that, however, extensive, might be the fruits of her own good management and industry, no increase would be demanded from her or from her children”.



MADURA

Lieutenant Colin Macaulay, 1792

Major James Welsh

THE PLIGHT OF 'DORA SWAMY' HEIR OF MARDU OF SIVAGANGA

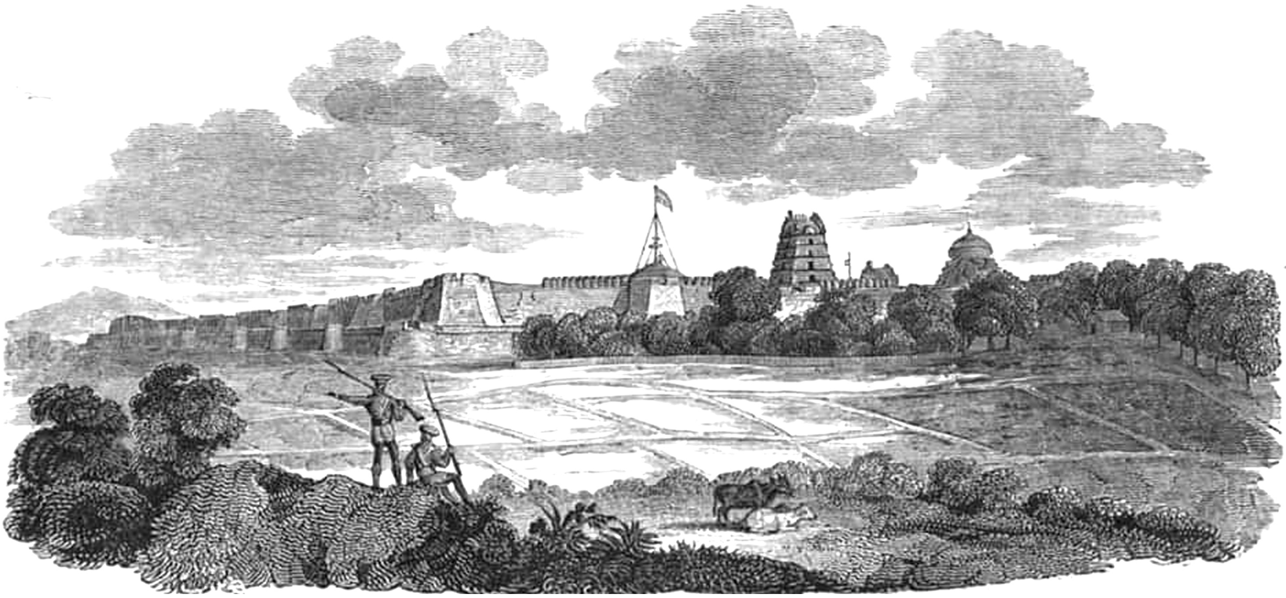
[EXTRACT FROM 'THE MILITARY REMINISCENCES' - 'A JOURNAL OF NEARLY FORTY YEARS' ACTIVE SERVICE IN THE EAST INDIES' BY COLONEL JAMES WELSH OF THE MADRAS ESTABLISHMENT – p.128-135]

"Colonel Agnew having returned to Madras on the 4th of October (1801), we were again put under the orders of Major Colin Macaulay, and remained inactive, waiting to hear from him. The head men of fifty villages came in to-day to take cowle, and brought intelligence that the Murdoos had disbanded their forces; and, with only two hundred followers, had secreted themselves in the Shangrapoy jungle. This we considered as very good news, for we were not a little weary of such a tedious and unprofitable warfare.

What followed afterwards, was, indeed, of little importance, the enemy no where making head against us; parties were sent to hunt them down in the different jungles, and I had the bad luck to be in full pursuit of one of the Murdoos, for whom a large reward was advertised, when a few of our ally Peons fired at, wounded, and took him, close to our party; thus depriving us of about ten thousand pagodas, or four thousand pounds sterling. In a few days both the Murdoos, with their families, Cátabomia Naig, Dalawai Pilly, and the Dumb Brother, were all taken, and the men all hanged, excepting Dora Swamy, the youngest son of Cheena Murdoo, and Dallawai Pilly, who, being of less consequence, were transported for life to Prince of Wales's Island, with seventy of their devoted followers; and thus ended this most harassing warfare, in which the expenditure of life had been profuse, and the result any thing but honourable to the survivors.

Of the two Murdoos, so frequently mentioned in this narrative, the elder brother was called Wella, or Velli Murdoo, but he had nothing to do with the management of the country. He was a great sportsman, and gave up his whole time to hunting and shooting. Being a man of uncommon stature and strength, his chief delight was to encounter the monsters of the woods; and it was even said, that he could bend a common Arcot rupee with his fingers. Unencumbered with the cares or trappings of government, he led a sort of wandering life; and occasionally visited his European neighbours at Tanjore, Trichinopoly, and Madura, by whom he was much esteemed.

If any one wanted game, a message sent to Velli Murdoo was sure to procure it; or if he wished to partake in the sports of the field, Velli Murdoo was the man to conduct him


PALLAMCOTTAH

to the spot, and to insure his success, as well as to watch over his safety. Did a royal tiger appear, while his guest was surrounded by hardy and powerful pikemen, Velli Murdoo was the first to meet the monster and despatch him. A life such as this, although it may appear idle and insignificant to those accustomed to the safety of a well-regulated country, was very far from being without it's usefulness, in a district overrun with jungle, and infested by beasts of prey. The minor game was, however, politely decoyed, or driven in front of his European friend, who might thus, with less danger, kill hogs, elks, deer, pea-fowl, &c. in abundance. From this Oriental Nimrod I had received many marks of attention and kindness, when stationed at Madura, in the year 1795, and then one of the youngest subalterns in the place ; a pretty certain proof of his disinterestedness.

The Cheena Murdoo was the ostensible sovereign of an extensive and fertile country, and his general residence was at Sherewele. Though of a dark complexion, he was a portly, handsome, and affable man, of the kindest manners, and most easy access; and though ruling over a people to whom his very nod was a law, he lived in an open Palace, without a single guard; indeed, when I visited him in February, 1795, every man who chose to come in, had free ingress and egress, while every voice called down the blessing of the Almighty upon the father of his people. From a merely casual visit, when passing through his country, he became my friend, and during my continuance at Madura, never failed to send me presents of fine rice and fruit; particularly a large rough-skinned orange, remarkably sweet, which I have never met with in such perfection in any other part of India. It was he, also, who first taught me to throw the spear, and hurl the collery stick, a weapon scarcely known elsewhere, but in a skillful hand, capable of being thrown to a certainty to any distance within one hundred yards. Yet this very man, I was afterwards destined by the fortune of war, to chase like a wild beast; to see badly wounded, and captured by common Peons; then lingering with a fractured thigh in prison; and lastly, to behold him, with his gallant brother, and no less gallant son, surrounded by their principal adherents, hanging in chains upon a common gibbet!

Of the Cat, I have already made mention, but I cannot close this account of horrors, without a few words, in memory of one of the most extraordinary mortals I ever knew; a near relation of Catabomia Naig, who was both deaf and dumb, was well known by the English under the appellation of Dumby, or the Dumb Brother; by the Mussulmans, as Mookah ; and by the Hindoos, as Oomee; all having the like signification. He was a tall, slender lad, of a very sickly appearance, yet possessing that energy of mind, which, in troubled times, always gains preeminence; whilst, in his case, the very defect which would have impeded another, proved a powerful auxiliary in the minds of ignorant and superstitious idolaters. The Oomee was adored; his slightest sign was an oracle, and every man flew to execute whatever he commanded. No council assembled at which he did

not preside; no daring adventure was undertaken, which he did not lead. His method of representing the English was extremely simple: he collected a few little pieces of straw, arranged them on the palm of his left hand to represent the English force; then, with other signs, for the time, &c., he drew the other hand across and swept them off, with a whizzing sound from his mouth, which was the signal for attack; and he was generally the foremost in executing those plans, for our annihilation. Whatever undisciplined valour could effect, was sure to be achieved wherever he appeared; though poor Oomee was at last doomed to grace a gallows, in reward for the most disinterested and purest patriotism. He had escaped, as it were, by miracle, in every previous engagement, although every soldier in our camp was most anxious to destroy so notorious and celebrated a chieftain. On the 24th of May, when the fort was wrenched from them, and the whole were retreating, pursued by our cavalry, poor Oomee fell, covered with wounds, near a small village, about three miles from Punjalumcoorchy. As soon as our troops had returned from the pursuit, Colonel Agnew instantly ordered the Eteapooreans to follow them till night, offering rewards for any men of consequence, dead or alive. Our allies, consequently, set out with great glee, somewhat late in the evening; and in the meantime, an appearance of quiet induced some women of the village to proceed to the field of carnage, in the hope of finding some of the sufferers capable of receiving succour.

Amongst the heaps of slain they discovered the son of one of the party, still breathing, and after weeping over him, they began to raise him up, when exerting his little remaining strength, he exclaimed, " Oh mother! let me die, but try to save the life of Swamy, who lies wounded near me." The word he used, fully justifies my assertion of their adoration, as it's literal meaning is a deity. The woman, animated by the same feelings, immediately obeyed her dying son, and speedily found Oomee, weltering in his blood, but still alive; and these extraordinary matrons, immediately lifted, and carried him to the mother's house, where they were busily employed stanching his wounds, when they were alarmed by a sudden shout from the Eteapooreans, in pursuit. There is nothing like the ingenuity of woman at such a crisis. These miserable, and apparently half-imbecile creatures conceived a plan, in an instant, which not only proved successful, but most probably saved the lives of several others. They covered the body over with a cloth, and set up a shriek of lamentation peculiar to the circumstances. The Eteapooreans on their arrival, demanded the cause, and being informed, that a poor lad had just expired of the small-pox, fled for their lives out of the village, without ever turning to look behind them. How he was afterwards preserved, I could never learn; but, certainly, he was present, and as active as usual, on the 7th and 10th of June; and was taken alive at the conclusion of the campaign, and hanged along with his gallant and ill-fated relation, on the tower we had erected in the plain, before Punjalumcoorchy; now the only monument of that

once dreaded fortress, if we except the burying ground of six or seven hundred of our slaughtered comrades, in it's vicinity.

Transportation of Marudu's family to the Island 'Prince of Wales' from Tuticorin port

No sooner was order again restored than the southern corps returned to Pallamcottah; and I was detached to command Tutucorine, wither all the rebels destined for transportation were sent in the first instance; and there 1 had the melancholy satisfaction of lightening the chains of Dora Swamy, the younger and only surviving son of my poor quondam friend, Cheena Murdoo, a youth of about fifteen, condemned to perpetual banishment. With a mild and dignified resignation, this amiable young man bore his cruel fate without a murmur; but such was the melancholy expression in his fine countenance, that it was impossible to see and not commiserate him. As he was consigned to my personal charge, to connive at his escape was impossible; but being under the same roof with me, in the large fortified factory, I was enabled to free him from his ignominious fetters, and separate him from the mass of his former menials. His person was equally secure, in a commodious chamber, enjoying the company of his jailor and family, and fed with wholesome meals, dressed by a respectable man of his own caste and religion. A vessel being commissioned by Government to carry the seventy convicts to Penang, Lieutenant Rockhead of the 6th regiment was appointed to command the escort. Whether this appointment proceeded from the mere chance of routine, or from particular selection, I know not; but never could it have fallen on a man more fitted for the humane and honourable discharge of such a duty. I had known him intimately in the field, and he fortunately arrived in time to become personally acquainted with the now-condemned sovereign of the country in which we had so lately been employed. Captain Lee, who commanded the ship, had also an opportunity of participating in our feelings towards his future passengers, particularly the captive Prince, while the requisite stores and provisions were collecting and removing to the vessel.

Never shall I forget the day, when, on the wharf at Tutucorine, I consigned my charge over to Lieutenant Rockhead. I still seem to see the combination of affection and despair which marked the fine countenance of my young friend Dora Swamy, as I handed him into the boat; and the manly and silent misery, which his companions in affliction displayed, on quitting their dear native land for ever.

The shocking reappearance of 'Dora Swamy'

Here, to all appearance, our acquaintance was to end; but fortune had still another pang in store for me, for being forced to sea for my health, in the year 1818, and landing

at Penang, I received a sudden visit from a miserable decrepit old man: who, when, without the most distant recollection of his person or countenance, I demanded his name and business, looked for some time in my face, the tears ran down his furrowed cheek, and at length he uttered the word " Dora Swamy!" It came like a dagger to my heart; the conviction was instantaneous. My poor young prisoner stood before me; changed, dreadfully changed in outward appearance, but still with the same mind, and cherishing the remembrance of former days and former friendships. The casual hearing of my name had revived his affection, and, I much fear, the mistaken hope, that an advancement in rank might afford me the means of lessening his misery. He even entreated me to be the bearer of letters to his surviving family, but this I understood was contrary to the existing orders; since, though I found the Governor, the late Colonel Bannerman, my former commanding officer, kind and considerate, it did not appear to rest with him, and I was compelled to decline. Let me however, in conclusion, express a hope that this narrative may fall into the hands of some kind-hearted Director of that honourable Company, which I have served so long, and be the means of alleviating, if not entirely removing the sufferings of an innocent man; the country being now completely settled, and no chance of any ill effects, as regards state policy, likely to accrue from such a compassionate measure.

REBELLION OF KATTABOMMAN AND HIS ASSOCIATES AT PANCHALANKURICHI

Incursions of the Palayakkars [20]

In the 18th Century, towards consolidation of his territories, the Nawab made a settlement with the Travancore king who accepted to pay tribute. After the settlement with Travancore, Mohammad Ali dealt with the Palayakars. In consequence of the out-break of hostilities with Mysore in 1767, the Nawab and the Company withdrew their forces from the south. This factor together with the unrest among the Palayakars caused by the oppressive exactions made by the Nawab's Amuldars and their fighting spirit hindled by the machinations of Hyder Ali's emissaries, provoked the Palayakar outbreaks. The western Palayakars with a force of 20,000 men occupied Vasudevanallur and cut off the Nawab's communication with Tirunelveli. Kattabomman of Panchalamkurichi took circar posts in the eastern region. However Major Flint subdued the Western Palayakars and Kattabomman in 1767.

The Palayakar of Sivagiri was in open revolt against the Company and was soon joined by the other Palayakars. He was in treaty with the Dutch at Colombo and had collected ammunition sufficient to supply the force that was expected from that Government. He was negotiating with Hyder Ali and the Nawab's Mohammadan renter was suspected of similar treachery. The Dutch at Thoothukudi on the other hand joined with the English and announced Hyder Ali as their common enemy of the Europeans and the Governor General was in 1781 actually trying to negotiate with them an agreement by which in return for a force of 1000 European infantry, 200 European artillery and 1000 Malays, the district of Tinnevelly should be ceded to the Dutch, the nominal sovereignty of the Nawab remaining undisturbed. The Madras Government, however declined to forward the treaty and referred the matter to the court of Directors. In the following year open hostilities with the Dutch brokeout Thoothukudi was captured and no more was heard of these proposals.

The Assignment, 1781

In the history of the district, to be more correct, in the history of composite Tirunelveli district, the year 1781 is an epoch making year for the East India Company but a sad year for the natives, the reason being common (i.e) the alien rule in the district. In the year the Nawab assigned by treaty to the East India Company the management and control of whole of the revenue of the district by a Treaty on the condition that he should be entitled

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20 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 108.

KATTABOMMAN

one sixth part of them. George Proctor was posted as Superintendent of the district in 1781. His administration was not satisfactory to the Company and so Irwin was appointed in his place in 1783. The district was still in a state of utter disorder and Irwin represented the case plainly to the Madras Government. Col. Fullarton was despatched to quell the aggressive Palayakars and he was at Panchalamkurichi on 12, August 1783.

Col.Fullarton's Expedition to Panchalamkurichi [21]

Kattabomman of Panchalamkurichi in the meantime engaged himself in a conflict with the Palayakar of Chokkampatti. Expecting the appearance of British forces towards Chokkampatti through the direct route from Sivaganga he waited with 14000 soldiers. But Fullarton keeping his real destination perfectly concealed and taking a circular route through Tripachetty, Palamaneri and Nagalapuram descended upon Panchalamkurichi. The English commander ordered the surprised garrison to surrender but the latter preferred resistance. For the British forces, it was essential to capture the fort before the return of Kattabomman for its defence and strike terror by despatch. Hence the British army commenced a siege of the fort with expedition. The Panchalamkurichi army kept up a well-directed and constant fire. Still the besiegers destroyed a strong hedge which surrounded the fort and battered down a part of the wall. In a bright moon shine the troop advanced steadily to the breach but could not reach the summits of the walls. The soldiers guarding the fort continued their resistance with pikes and musquetory. After considerable slaughter on either side, the British troops withdrew from the venture. As the fort appeared insecure the troops of Kattabomman sallied out and retreated. On the 14, August 1783 the besiegers occupied by the fort. Fullarton sought to bring the Palayakar to an equitable settlement but did not succeed. On the other hand the chief of Panchalamkurichi with his troops joined Varaguna, the Palayakar of Sivagiri, who was also an anti-colonial. Both Varaguna and Kattabomman made vigorous preparation for an encounter with the Fullarton's army. However when Fullarton reached Sivagiri both the forces of Sivagiri and Panchalamkurichi retreated to the mountains as their weapons were not a match to the guns and grenades of the British. Col. Fullarton with the help of Chokkampatti Chief reached the hide-outs of the forces in the mountains.They got dispersed and thus both Panchalamkurichi and Sivagiri came under the control of the British. Kattabomman and Varaguna paid 30,000 Chakrams each in lieu of all the previous claims the company had and gave bonds for 15,000 pagodas each on condition for the restitution of their forts.

Surrender of Assignment, 1785

The control of Civil and Military powers in the district by the Company was shortlived as in 1785 the Assignment was surrendered to the Nawab and Irwin was directed by the Governor to handover the management of district to Nawab's Amuldars.

21 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 110.

The Assumption, 1790

Five years later in 1790 the Madras Government finding it impossible to induce the Nawab to pay its share of the Company's expenses assumed the Company's proclamation and the Board of Assigned Revenue (established in 1786) was entrusted with the revenue administration.

Benjamin Torin, the Collector

The Board of Assigned Revenue deputed Benjamin Torin as the Collector of 'Tinnevelly and the dependent Poligars'. In July 1792, a definite Treaty was signed with the Nawab by the Company by which the Madras Government undertook at their own risk and expense to collect the whole of the peshkush of dues of the Palayakars and to allow the Nawab credit for this amount in the contribution due to him by the Company. The management of the district was to rest with the Company until an amount equal to the arrears due had been collected. By virtue of this agreement Torin was in the same year appointed, 'Collector of Zamindar and palayakar Peshkush in the Tinnevelly, Madura, Trichinopoly, Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga districts.

Col.Maxwell was deputed toTirunelveli to render military assistance to Torin to enter into settlements with the Palayakars. Kattabomman attacked Alwartirunagari and Srivaikundam. In fact there was a kind of anarchy in the district. Though the Company was responsible for the collection of the Peshkush, the Nawab's ultimate sovereignty was recognised even over the Palayakars. The administration of the Circar territory and its inhabitants was actually in the hands of the Nawab's officers. By means of their Kaval system the palayakars exercised as much control over the circar villages as any government officer and in these villages, the Company had by the terms of the treaty no concern.

Panchalamkurichi [22]

Landon succeeded Torin as the District Collector on 12, November, 1792. On his death in 1794, George Ponney took charge as the Collector. In 1795, Thoothukudi was taken from the Dutch.

Panchalamkurichi now a little hamlet 2 km north of Ottapidaram, a taluk headquarter is a symbol of heroism and the people of Tamilnadu consider the soil of Panchalamkurichi so sacred as it was the land where bravery flourished in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Panchalamkurichi is said to be one of the 72 Palayams created by Viwanatha Nayak with the help of Ariyanatha Mudaliyar, his Dalavai. The Panchalamkurichi Palayam was under the control of the Telugu chieftains hailing from the Kambalatar community and

22 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 111.

the earliest historically known chief of Panchalamkurichi was Veera Pandya Nayak alias Kattabomma Nayak who ruled the Palayam from 1709 and 1736. Kattabomman seems to be their family title. He was succeeded by Polla Pandya Nayak in 1736 and he was in power upto 1760 when his son Jayaveera Kattabomma Nayak assumed Palayakarship. It was Jayaveera Kattabomman who encountered with Heron during his Tirunelveli invasion in alliance with Pulithevar. He allied with Mahpuzh Khan, Pulithevar and other Palayakars against the Nawab and the East India Company. It was he who opposed Khan Saheb with the help of the Dutch. He entered into an alliance with the Dutch at Colombo against the threat to his palayam. On the recall of Khan Saheb, the Palayakars were immediately up in arms and refused to pay their dues. Foremost among them was Jagaveera Kattabomman. In 1767 Major Flint, marched with a strong force against Panchalamkurichi. An assault was made but was defeated. Having lost several men including eight Europeans, Major Flint decided to blockade but during the night the defenders made good their escape to their Dutch allies at Thoothukudi and Vembar. Jagaveera Kattabomman entered into an alliance with the Dutch in Colombo and Thoothukudi coast. The East India Company rehearsed their attack against Panchalamkurichi in 1783 under Col. Fullarton. This attack also ended in fiasco and the Company forces endured heavy loss. Jagaveera Kattabomman also suffered a heavy loss of men and he evacuated the fort as soon as the storming party advanced. The Company forces entered the fort and found a large number of guns and ammunition and forty thousand Pagodas, a sum which was distributed among the troops. An interesting find was the original of a treaty between Kattabomma Nayak and the Dutch Government at Colombo. Jagaveera Kattabomman died in 1791 leaving behind him the bravest of his family, Veera Pandya Kattabomman, who became an early martyr to the anti-colonial movement.

Veera Pandya Kattabomman (1791-1799) [23]

Veera Pandya Kattabomman, a proverbial of self respect, patriotism and gallantry became the Palayakar of Panchalamkurichi. According to legand and local ballads, that the fort of Panchalamkurichi was built at a place where a hare was dared to oppose the hunting dog, by the ancestors of Veera Pandya Kattabomman. It was a mud fort, the ruins of which, now under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India, despite the British demolished the fort, ploughed the soil up and down, sowed linseed and ever removed the name Panchalamkurichi in the revenue records, are seen and recovered even today. People who visit the fort take the soil with reverance and wear it on their forehead as sacred ashes. Some carry the soil as a memento. Nearby the ruins of the fort is the temple dedicated to Goddess Jakkamma, the family deity of the Kattabomman. Adjacent to the remains of the

23 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 112.

old fort in 1973, the Government of Tamil Nadu created a fort of resembling that of the fort of Veera Pandya Kattabomman and annual festivals are celebrated in commemoration of the great hero who had laid his life in the altar of the anti-colonial outbreak.

William Collin Jackson

The Company sent William Collin Jackson as the Collector of Tinnevelly Peshkush with headquarters at Ramanathapuram, in the end of 1797. In 1798, monsoon failed in the district. The district experienced an excessive drought and the desolation was ‘too melancholy to the eye, not to convince the mind. Despite the starvation and mass exodus, the evil forces combined together in oppressing the people. The renters and the assignees increased the prices of articles by common agreement.

Extortion and plunder made the adventure of a merchant un-enterprising.The Collector imposed an arbitrary embargo on the importation of grain through the sea with an intention of providing every artificial attraction to the hoarded grains of the Company. In consequence the price of grain shot high and the inhabitants found it impossible to obtain any relief. When the Madras Council heard about it, lifted the embargo, but it was too late. Jackson’s unwise policy no doubt descredited the British administration.

The discontented people decided to liberate the land from the British domination and to restore the old royal institution to their former glory. The leaders of the movement thus placed their reliance upon force and the united action for the attainment of their objective. However it was the Palayakars who took the initiative in forming a confederacy of the anti-British Chiefs against the Company.Veerapandya Kattabomman was the prominent member of the confederacy of the Palayakars along with the Palayakars of Sivaganga and Virupakshi. This confederacy of the native chiefs threatened the most injurious consequences to the tranquility and security of the British empire.

However it was an insult offered by, the Collector Jackson to Kattabomman that precipitated the Palayakar rebellion of 1799, perhaps prematurely. When an insurrection broke out in Ramanathapuram in 1797, the Eastern Palayakars under the leadership of Veera Pandya Kattabomman joined it, refusing the payment of tribute to the English. The Collector sent his servants to Panchalamkurichi to collect the Peishcush and wrote letters in language of reprehension and remonstrance to the Palayakar but with no effect. Thereupon Jackson requested the authority of the Board of Revenue for punishing the Palayakar in an exemplary manner. On the direction of the Board of Revenue, Jackson summoned Kattabomman to attend his office at Ramanathapuram within two weeks. After sending the summons, the Collector started on a tour, of Tirunelveli. On 27th August when Jackson reached Courtalam, Kattabomman with his retinue waited for him but the

Collector refused an interview. In the meantime Jackson permitted the Chieftains of less note to settle the accounts. Kattabomman felt humiliated, still anxious to settle the acounts, followed the Collector for about 640 km. yet without success.

Ramanathapuram Episode [24]

On September 17, both the Collector and the Palayakar arrived at Ramanathapuram. Certain events in the Ramanathapuram palace led Kattabomman to presume that the Collector decided to arrest him. On September 19, 1798 Jackson admitted Veera Pandya and his minister Sivasubramaniam Pillai to his presence. The Collector reprimanded the Chief remarking that the latter did well in obeying his orders by which he probably saved himself from ruin. Then he proceeded to verify his accounts from which it appeared that the Palayakar had already cleared most of the arrears. Denied of seats Kattabomman and his minister stood before the Collector for three hours. Still he did not grant them leave, but arrogantly directed them to stay inside the fort. Soon a few sepoys appeared. The Palayakar and his minister combining alarm with annoyance forced their way out of the fort. At the gate there occurred a clash with the palayakar's retinue, resulting in the death of Company's sepoys including Lieutenant Clarke. Sivasubramania Pillai was taken prisoner but Kattabomman made his escape. In retaliation the Kattabomman's army plundered the bazaar of Ramanathapuram and the Company's store houses and made incursions into the British territories.

On hearing the Ramanathapuram episode, Lord Clive issued a proclamation inviting Kattabomman to submit to the Company's administration and promising a fair investigation into the incident but warned him of the Madras Council's determination to make him a lasting example of its serious displeasure if he trifled with its authority. In an effort to remove all cause of dissidence on the part of the Palayakar, the Governor released Sivasubramaina Pillai from custody and suspended Jackson from office, pending investigation.He directed the Major General Floyd, the commanding officer at Tiruchirappalli, to open a communication with Panchalamkurichi. Accordingly, the latter asked to the Palayakar to surrender and continue as the Chief or else he would see his ruins.

Enquiry Committee

As the response from Kattabomman proved favourable the Madras Council appointed a Committee of three members, William Brown, William Orms and John Casmajor to enquire into the circumstances leading to the Ramanathapuram episode. The Committee

24 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 113-119.

interviewed Kattabomman on 15, December, 1798 and upon enquiry acquitted him of the charge of rebellion.The Committee condemned the Collector Jackson for his rashness in consequence of which Jackson was transferred and S.R.Lushington was appointed as the Collector. The Committee rightly asserted that there was no unnecessary delay on the part of the Chieftain of Panchalamkurichi in complying with the summons from the Collector, but the manners in which he was forced to follow Jackson for twenty three days through the territories of the lesser Chieftains was indeed mortifying and that the rigour which attended the treatment he received at Ramanathapuram had so alarmed him for his personal safety that he made his escape. However as one of his pike-men stabbed Lieutenant Clark to death, Kattabomman was required to make a provision equal to the salary and allowance of the victim for the support of the latter's family. But Kattabomman had no intention to dishonour the Lieutenant. Inspite of the fair verdict of the Committee and the conciliatory policy of the English, it does not appear that the latter succeeded in re-conciliating the Palayakar. Kattabomman organised resistance utilising the opportunity of the out break of the Fourth Mysore war.

The Rebellion, 1799

Kattabomman organised a league which included the Palayakars of Nagalapuram, Ezhalayirampannai, Kolarpatti, Kadalkudi and Kulattoor. He assumed the leadership of the league by virtue of the influence he commanded through the forces of his character and financial resources. Veera Pandyan established close relationship with the Chieftains of Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga and Dindigul. He posted his guards on the borders of his palayam and directed his agents at Madras for gathering military sources. The agent sent by him to Madras was Pandian Pillai, brother of Sivasubramania Pillai. In August 1799, he sent Sevetiah Vira Pandya Nayak and Veerabadhra Pillai on a mission to Elavarasanallur and won the alliance of the Kallars. Measures were taken to safeguard his interests and to provide against the enemy gathering information of his secret moves.

Despite the organisation of the league, it appeared weak, for Kattabomman gave importance to gaining the support of the Palayakars while he ignored the common inhabitants and alienated the villagers by his exaction of taxes at rates higher than what they were accustomed to pay.

Course of the Rebellion

Events now moved to a crisis. In August 1799, the son of the Palayakar of Sivagiri, an ally of both Marudhu brothers of Sivaganga and Kattabomman and his adviser Mappillai Vannian visited Panchalamkurichi. They had consultations and decided to establish their

influence in Sivagiri as the ruling chief of the territory refused to join the alliance. Added to this, as Panchalamkurichi being situated in an open plain appeared vulnerable to the hostile forces, the possession of a firm stronghold was considered a real necessity. The strategic location of the fort of Sivagiri at the foot of the mountains of the west and the barriers around rendered it eminantly suited both for offensive and defensive operations. Major Gramme of the Company's service had rightly pointed out that Kattabomman's design in marching soldiers against Sivagiri is to get possession either by force or treachery of that fort and a narrow pass which leads to it, difficult of passage, where he hoped to stand his ground against the force which his fears naturally suggested to him would be sent to punish him. Thus in a bid to strengthen the league an armed column consisting of the followers of Kattabomman, the son of the Palayakar of Sivagiri and several Chiefs allied to them, led by Dalavai Kumarasamy Nayak, advanced to the west. As the Palayakar of Sivagiri was a pro-Company Chief, the Madras Government considered it a challenge to its own authority and ordered the movement of the forces against the league.

It is clear that Kattabomman committed no serious offence against British authority as to provoke any violent reprisal. Though the Palayakar of Sivagiri paid tribute to the Company as provided by the Carnatic Treaty of 1792, he was not its subject but was of the Nawab of Arcot. So, the right of intervention in a conflict between two subjects fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Nawab but not of the Palayakar of Sivagiri, as a member of the alliance, served as a party in this venture and no complaint was preferred by the father against the son still the English decided to employ force against Veera Pandyan in disregard of the Nawab's sovereignty. This was because more than any other leader of consequence Kattabomman received the serious attention of the Madras Council not only due to the complaints preferred by Jackson but also because of the investigation ordered by it into the Ramanathapuram incident. More than this the Company waited for an opportunity to suppress the Palayakars, thereby to execute the positive instruction in the court of Directors that 'all subordinate military establishment should be annihilated within the limits now subject to our dominion'. Free from the military operation against Mysore, which ended in a complete victory early in May 1799, the British administrators found it opportune to carry the directive of the Court of Directors into effect. Evidently the violent procedure against Kattabomman represented a definite attempt to enforce an already formulated policy of the Company, aimed at the liquidation of the Palayam system, taking advantage of an opportunity created by the co-operation of the defiant league with the rebels of Sivagiri for gaining possession of this fort. It was not aimed at the suppression of any rebellion, for there was neither any blatant defiance of British authority either by Kattabomman or any other member of his league, nor any rash refusal of the payment of tribute, for any such precipitate step at this moment portented a certain doom.

In May 1799 Lord Mornington issued orders from Madras for the advance of forces from Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur and Madurai to Tirunelveli. Major Bannerman, armed with extensive powers, assumed the command of the forces. The Madras Government gave him the following instruction. "The rebellious conduct of Catabomanaig (Kattabomman Nayak), Poligar of Panjalamcrchy (Panchalamkurichi) having rendered it necessary to equip a military force for the purpose of suppressing the commotions existed by him, the Right Honourable Governor General (Lord Wellesly) has resolved to avail himself of this opportunity to carry into effect the orders of the Court of Directors for disarming the whole of the southern Palayakars and for reducing those Chieftains to the authority of the Civil Government....... The object of his attention should attack on the fort of Panchalamkurichi."

Advancing through Ramanathapuram, the Company army encamped at Tirunelveli. On 1, September 1799, Bannerman served an ultimatum directing Kattabomman to attend on him at Palayamkottai on 4 September. Kattabomman's tactful reply to the ultimatum was,"As I am a person thinking to be ever submissive to the Honourable Company, and obey their orders, there is no hesitation to attend on you and obey your commands, but there is no auspicious day at present, when there is, I will attend and obey your orders". The letter was no doubt submissive but evasive. It is clear that he was not prepared either to surrender or resist.

Bannerman led his forces towards Panchalamkurichi and on the day break on 5, September 1799, the troops were assembled in front of the fort of Panchalamkurichi. The fort, an irregular parallelogram, 500 ft.long and 300 ft. broad was constructed entirely of mud and had square bastions and short curtains. The Company troops cut-off the communications of the fort and routed a body of armed men who rallied from the villages and sought access. Ramalinga Mudaliar whom Bannerman deputed with a message asking for surrender which Kattabomman rejected, gathered the secrets of the fort. He reported to the British Camp that there was a wide breach in the bastion east of the main gate of the citadel that no preparation had been made to barricade the inner past of the gate and that the fort itself was guarded by about 12,000 to 15000 only. On the basis of this report which indicated that the Kattabomman and his men never anticipated this expectation; Bannerman decided his strategy of assault.

The plan of operation appeared well co-ordinated. The Company troops with a six pounder were ordered to blow open the south gate. The Ettayapuram army and a section of Company troops were ordered to attack the north face of the fort. The signal for assault being given, a heavy cannonade broke open the gate by stages. The storming party advanced with order and resolution, but in the bitter contest that ensued they found themselves unequal to the task. The troops of Veera Pandya, led by Umaithurai held their ground with determination and threw back the hostile columns. Restored to order the assailants

made a second yet a more resolute endeavour but were again repulsed. So, gallant was the resistance offered by the army of Veera Pandya Kattabomman that successive attacks were repeatedly thwarted. Sustaining heavy losses and overwhelmed with despondency, Bannerman wrote to Madras Government; 'The attempt was persevered in so long as there was a shadow of success and never was European energy more gallantly displayed than by the officers on this unfortunate occasion'.To tide over this humiliation, the British General called reinforcement from Palayamkottai which arrived at Panchalamkurichi. As the broken citadel of the Panchalamkurichi appeared vulnerable, Veera Pandya Kattabomman and his men evacuated it and moved towards Kadalgudi. On the way, Veera Pandyan Kattabomman's men had to fight against the British troops that followed in Kolvarpatti in which Sivasubramania Pillai, Veera Pandya Kattabomman's able Minister fell as a prisoner in the hands of the British. Nagalapuram and other Palayam that supported Veera Pandya Kattabomman were brought under the control of the British.Vijaya Raghunatha Tondaiman, the Raja of Pudukkottai, captured Kattabomman, from the jungles of Kalaiyar Koil, and handed him over to the British. The Pudukkottai Raja reported to Collector Lushington with real pride: " On the every side in the mountain I had placed my people to find out the hiding place of Kattabomman. He, Umaithurai, his two brothers-in-law and three others were surrounded at Kalaiyarkoil on the borders of Sivagangai and caught. When Kattabomman was seized, he wished to have slain himself, but my people having bound his hands kept him in confinement".

Kattabomman - An Early Martyr [25]

Bannerman brought the patriots to an assembly of the Palayakars in Kayathar and after a mockery of trial sentenced them to death. Soundara Pandyan of Nagalapuram was executed at Gopalapuram and Sivasubramania Pillai at Nagalapuram on 13 September 1799. The body of Sivasubramania Pillai was paraded through the streets of Panchalamkurichi and his head severed and picked on a bastion of a fallen citadel. On 16, October, Veera Pandya Kattabomman was tried before an assembly of Palayakars, summoned at Kayathar. As a real patriot with a contempt for death, he boldly admitted the charges levelled against him. He asserted that he did send an expedition to Sivagiri and engage the British forces in the battle of Panchalamkurichi. Thereupon as it was expected, the English Commander announced the extreme penalty of death. Veera Pandya Kattabomman was taken off and executed at a conspicuous spot near the old fort of Kayathar on 17, October, 1799. A tamarind tree, by the road side was selected as the gallows which became a subject of worship and reverence for centuries followed offering bricks. Never before had the great patriot displayed this nationalist pride in so unexempled a degree as he did in the last but

25 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 118.

tragic moments of his life. Overwhelmed by awe, Bannerman wrote to Madras, "It may not be amiss here to observe that the manner and behaviours of the Palayakar during the whole time of his being before those who were assembled yesterday at the examination, which took place, were undaunted and suspicious. He frequently eyed the Palayakar of Ettayapuram who had been active in attempting to secure his person and the Palayakars of Sivagiri with an appearance indignant scorn and when he went out to be executed, he walked with a firm and daring air and cast looks of sullen contempt on the Palayakars to his right and left as he passed. It was reported to me that in his way to the noose, he expressed some anxiety for his dumb brother (Umaithurai) alone and said when he reached the fort of the tamarind tree on which he was hanged, that he then regretted having left his foot in the defence of which it would have been better for him to have died.

Kattabomman, Soundara Pandyan and Sivasubramania Pillai together with thousands of their comrades at arms became the early martyrs of the anti-British Movement. The British followed up the execution of the leaders with the implementation of a radical policy aimed at instilling fear in the minds of the inhabitants and liquidating those factors that contributed to the anti-British alliances.

Leadership of Umaithurai, Second Battle of Panchalankurichi and Execution of Maruthu Pandiars [26]

Umaithurai otherwise called Kumaraswamy assumed the command of the revolutionary forces. A unique phenomenon's that this popular movement found in this deaf and dumb man of very sickly appearance, its undisputed leader. So, great was his popularity that he was known by his different appellations but of the same meaning: "Oomae, or dumb among the common people, Mookha among the Muslims and dumb brother (of Kattabomman) dumb boy or dumby among the English". The leaders, chiefs and their loyal soldiers referred to him as swamy, literally meaning deity. The personal appearance of Umaithurai seemed deceptive. Though sickly, he possessed a masterful mind and commanded the obsolute loyalty of his people. James Welsh who had an intimate knowledge of this hero had declared, "he was one of the most extraordinary mortals I ever knew". He asserted, the Oomee was adored, his slight sign was an oracle, and every man flew to execute whatever he commanded. No council assembled at which he did not preside, no daring adventure was undertaken which he did not lead. Whatever undisciplined valour could effect was sure to be achieved wherever he appeared" An enterprising character and a restless spirit, he was a leader, violent and rough yet the gifts of his personal magnetism, were such that he was passionately loved and affectionately adored.

26 Extracts taken from District Gazetteer, Thoothukudi, Vol-1, R.Sinnakani, Year 2007, P. 124 - 135

A deadly enemy of the English, he masterminded the formulations and executions of those plans which were aimed at the annihilation of colonial imperialism. Together with his brother Kattabomman he engineered the organisation of the Tirunelveli League against the company in 1798. He accompanied his brother to Ramanathapuram and when the British soldiers appeared to arrest Vira Pandyan in the Ramalinga vilas, he alerted his followers and manoevered the escape. When hostilities broke out, he led his men in the successful defence of Panchalamkurichi. More conspicuous and colourful than Veera Pandyan, Umaithurai was the defacto leader of the anti-British reaction of 1799. Kattabomman was very affectionate to his brother, Umaithurai which was revealed when he was taken to the gallows in Kayathar as he expressed his anxiety for the life of Umaithurai. Subsequently, together with other patriots, he was thrown into prison at Palayamkottai but, made his escape in February 1801. Since, then, he devoted himself to successive assaults on hostile positions and destructions of British authority. His method of representing the English was extremely simple. He collected a few little pieces of straw arranged them on the palm of his left hand to represent the British force; then with other signs - characteristics of a dumb man and a whizzing sound, drew the other hand across and swift them off. This was the signal for attack.The exploints of Umaithurai imparted a real thrill and intensity to the struggle that followed.

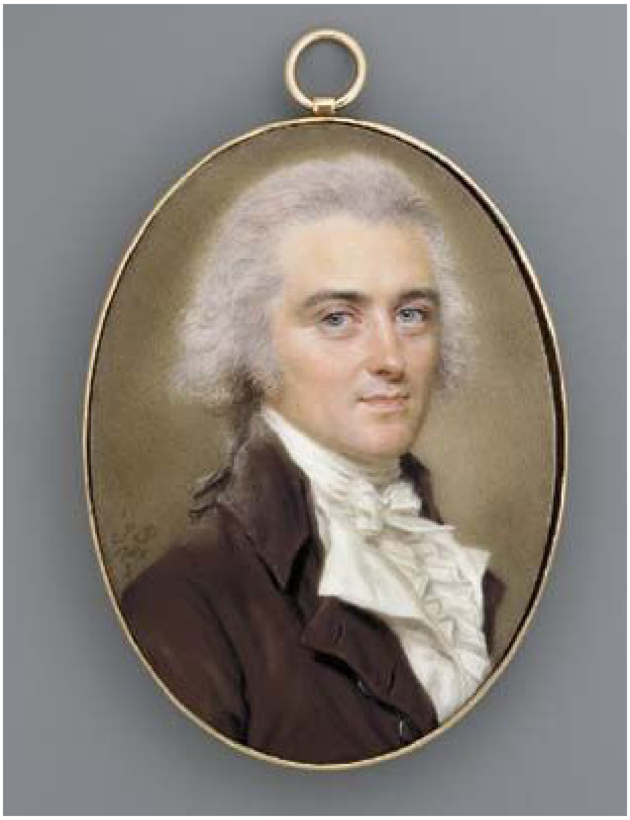
Capture of Thoothukudi

The reoccupation of Panchalamkurichi from the enemy was a turning point in the movement, for the tide of rebellion marked by brilliant victories, began to sweep the country violently. The patriotic army established themselves in force and within short space of six days reconstructed the bastions and walls of the demolished fort with mud, sand and husk, making them defensible.

The principal inhabitants, the peasants, peons and Kavalkars, as the English themselves had admitted, cheerfully obeyed the summons from their leaders and joined the insurrection. The parties equipped themselves with firelocks, which were seized from the British, attacked their enemy posts and rescued from prison Karuthiah of Kadalgudi and Veerabhadra Pillai, brother of Sivasubramania Pillai, were involved in the organisation of Tiirunelveli League against the alien rule. Their extensive ravages led to the complete annihilation of British authority in the eastern region of the province. The company sent forces to the disturbed areas in an attempt to check the spread of the rebellion but were forced to retreat.

The revolutionary forces spread themselves in all directions, surprised the British Ports, released prisoners and seized the arms and other stores, Alwar Tirunagari,

John Alexander Bannerman



Benjamin Torin

Srivaikundam, Kulathur,Kadalgudi, Nagalapuram, Kolwarpatti and Ezhayirampannai fell to the storming parties.The palayakars rebuilt the demolished forts and converted them into their strongholds. On 3 March, they advanced to Thoothukudi, a commercial centre of considerable importance under the control of the Dutch and surrounded the fort. Edward Ormsley, who commanded the garrison, ordered the soldiers to open fire, but the latter made common cause with the patriots. The soldiers handed over the arms to the insurgents and surrendered the fort. Inspite of this victory, the revolutionaries showed magnanimity to the humbled foe. They permitted Edward Ormsley to gather all his properties and go away to safety. However, they took Baggot, the Master attendant, the prisoner. Overcame with affliction, his panic-stricken wife followed the victorious palayakars entered the fort unmolested and made entreaties.Taking pity, Umaithurai and Sevethiah, with hesitation whatsoever, granted her request. They not only released Baggot from custody but also restored all his confiscated properties. In fact even in their attitude towards their deadly enemy, the patriots observed the maxims of magnanimity and chivalry. Then, the Thoothukudi was under Dutch occupation who more or less played neutral in the south Indian rebellion against the British. After consolidating their control over the coastal strip, they made preparation for the capture of Tirunelveli.

British Reaction

As the tide of insurrections swept over the country, the English channalised all the resources at their command in their attempt to check its tempo. Colin Macaulay, the Commanding Officer of the forces in Tirunelveli, issued a proclamation threatening with death all those who were found in arms or assisting the rebels with arms and provisions. He directed the loyal chiefs to gather information on the movements of the revolutionaries and concentrations. To terrorise the inhabitants three of the rebel emissaries, who were on missions seeking support of the people but seized, were hanged to death. In his endeavour to weaken the will of the defiant population, he sent parties on raids to the rebel territories to capture the families of principal inhabitants and to cut off their communication with the confederates of the north.

Macaulay initiated effective measures for a powerful offensive in Panchalamkurichi. He assembled the British forces of Tirunelveli at Sankarankoil. At his suggestion, Velu Thambi, the Mission of Travancore rushed his troops in support of the British against the patriots. Advancing through Kayathar, the forces under the command of Macaulay reached Kadayanallur, 10 km. from Panchalamkurichi, on 8 February 1801. In the evening, they pitched tents. No sooner did troops get ready to take their meal than they found their camp attacked by a group of assailants. Determined to forestall the threat to their reconstructed

strongholds, the patriotic rebels advancing under the cover of a deep ravine made a sudden and simultaneous attack on three sides of the British camp. The besieged charged the rebels and forty of the latter fell dead, yet their attempt to disperse the assailants failed.

On 9, February, the British forces, resuming their march, took position near Panchalamkurichi. They decided to rout the rebels in a quick action but to their astonishment, they found the citadel, which had been completely demolished in 1799, as it were by magic in six days. Macaulay reconnoitred the fort, but, discovered to his dismay every part of it, well manned by thousands of insurgents. As a quick victory seemed highly impossible, he pitched his tent and decided to assault in the night. A body of troops advanced to capture the temple of Ottapidaram in the meantime. As soon as this expedition had been sent, it found itself surrounded by thousands of armed men who appeared on the rear and bank. So, daring and resolute was the probe made by the rebels that it convinced Macaulay of the magnitude of the lurking danger. He reported to Madras that the fort in view was found heavily guarded by men beyond all calculations. Meanwhile, a huge column of rebels assembled in the Vallanadu Hills.

Considering his position extremely precarious, Macaulay ordered a sudden retreat under the guise of preparing for an offensive the British army misled the rebels and began a humiliating withdrawal. When the patriots found out that Macaulay was retreating, they chased the British army in which Umaithurai had lost 110 of his men, killed in a series of clashes, yet the chase continued, until the British forces reached Palayamkottai.

Col.Macaulay tried to retrieve the lost prestige of the British army by capturing Kadalgudi and Nagalapuram, the communication centres of the leaders of the rebellion but not succeeded. The rebel forces reduced the British post in Srivaikundam on 19 March to submission.The garrison in Srivaikundam finding it impossible to maintain the post evacuated it and retreated to Palayamkottai. In fact, rebel unity and valour triumphed over British discipline and arms.

The Battle of Panchalamkurichi

The British began to beef up their forces to attack Panchalamkurichi. General Brathwaits, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Madras Presidency ordered the British troops in the north to march towards the south. All the troops arrived and assembled at Kayathar on 27 March 1801. The forces under Macaulay moved towards Panchalamkurichi and arrived at Pasuvanthanai where the troops of Ettayapuram Palayakar joined with the British.Soon after this, the army of Panchalamkurichi surrounded the British forces. The patriots, though ill-equipped, attacked the English with uncommon determination. In the fierce battle that ensued the besieging party lost ninety six men. Failing to capture the enemy's guns and subjected to more losses, these brave but unskilful pedestrians' as James Welsh described, these crowds withdrew to a nearby jungle.

Macaulay led his army to Panchalamkurichi on 31 March. The fort of Panchalamkkurichi rebuilt with the mud of very solid and adhesive quality had walls of about thirteen feet high Macaulay concentrated his forces on the northwest angle of the fort throwing out the cavalry to the south and the troops of Ettayapuram to the east. When all the arrangements were carried to perfections, he ordered the assault. The heavy guns mounted on an elevated spot, opening a heavy fire, commenced breaching the north-west bastion.A part of the wall collapsed at 3.00 p.m. on 31 March 1801.The European and native troops of the British army, immediately moved forward in strength to the breach under the heaviest fire imaginable. The gallant assault of the powerful enemy, however, did not deter the leaders of the rebellion from their determination to challenge and contest. With interpid firmness and unconquerable daring, they engaged the English in a fierce charge. The moment the British soldiers advanced to the breach, they were piked or shot. Successive attempts were made to cripple the rebel resistance but, were repeatedly thwarted. The troops of Ettayapuram, supported by the company's batteries attacked the east face of the stronghold but fared no better than their allies. During the entire course of this battle, the defenders kept up the most unnatural yell,. which ceased only with the complete repulse of the assault. Humiliated by this unexpected discomfiture, Edward Clive, Governor of Madras, reported to the Court of Directors that the English troops after sustaining an unequal conflict against a superior force, with unshakable bravery and discipline, were repulsed with heavy loss.

James Welsh, one of the officers who fought in the British army had narrated in his Military Reminiscences: "All length a retreat was ordered, and a truly dismal scene of horror succeeded, all our killed, and many of the wounded lying left at the foot of the breach, over which the enemy (the rebels) immediately sprung and pursued the rear while others pierced the bodies both of the dying and the dead. As all had alike partaken in the dangers and discomfiture of the day, a dead silence reigned through out our live (during the following night)- the only tribute we could then pay to the memory of our departed brethern and the enemy so far respected our grief, as to allow us its unmolested indulgence......The 1st of April was ushered in with the painful re-collection, that many of our late gay and cheerful companions were lying at the foot of the breach unburied; and a flag of truce was consequently sent to the fort to entreat permission to remove and inter our dead. This was kindly and unconditionally accorded and we then collected the disfigured and gory bodies, and burried them in the evening, with military honours; the enemy setting us a bright example of humanity, made not the smallest attempt to disturb us and we enjoyed good night's rest, that of the preceeding having been anything but refreshing".

The complete failure of the British forces in this savage battle appeared to them perfectly inexplicable as the success of the insurgents in their defence of the breach seemed miraculous. From the wonderfully sheltered and concealed enclaves, they, keeping themselves hidden, wielded the pikes, eighteen to twenty feet long as sharp as the razor against the pressing aggressors.Welsh observes, ...the system of defence adopted by these savages would have done credit to any engineers. Nothing could surpass it but their unwearied perseverence.The attack having failed, the English instituted a blockade of the fort of Panchalamkurichi and waited for the arrival of enforcement.

Sevethiah's Appeal to Serfoji

The British forces continued the blockade of Panchalamkurichi. Failing to storm the fort and badly in need of supply and re-inforcements, the company requisitioned the services of its allied Palayakars. Serfoji, the Rajah of Thanjavur, readily consented to extend his full support.

On knowing the Serfoji's readiness to support the company, Sevethiah wrote a letter to him entreating him not to help the enemy and to help the Panchalamkurichi cause. The English translation of the letter written by Sevethiah to Serfoji, was found in the Military consultation of the East India Company (vol. pp.4292-4298 - Tamil Nadu Archives). In this letter, he explained the war against the Europeans by his brother and himself. The letters worded so patriotic and to arouse the sympathy of Serfoji towards the Panchalamkurichi leaders, did not excite Serfoji. He continued his support to the company. The Minister of Serfoji to whom the letter was delivered passed this to the Company and the messenger who carried the letter was imprisoned. Sevethiah burrying his personal vengeance against Tondaiman of Pudukkottai for his role in the execution of his brother, beseeched his cooperation for his patriotic cause either by sending his army in support of Maruthu brothers who were leaders of the anti- British league operating in Sivagangai or by remaining neutral. But Sevethiah's attempt to consolidate the native rulers against the British proved futile.

The Blockade of Panchalamkurichi

Though the patriots received no assistance from the princes, they faced the ordeal with coolness and courage. Sallying from the broken walls, they waged a continuous war in their bid to break through the Cordon raised by the enemy. Waiting for the arrival of re-inforcements Macaulay, on the other hand, decided to hold his lines before the rebel citadel. He employed pioneers and lascars to erect shelters for the men on duty and formed a regular camp.

By 8 o’clock in the night on 8, April 1801, the rebels determined to keep the troops engaged, saluted them with a shower of bullets. It was remarkably dark. The enemy could not ascertain party but, when the moon rose on the horizon it perceived a phalanx retiring to the fort. This marked the beginning of a long series of clashes. From 8, April to 22 May, daily skirmishes, the sallying of the rebels from the fort and loss of lives on both sides were common.

At noon on 22, May, a heavy thunderstorm, accompanied by wind and rain suddenly assailed the position of the Company. As it was the most favourable moment, when firearms would be ineffective, for the much dreaded pike-charge, the English troops began to fall in. The Panchalamkurichi army utilised this opportunity and a thousand pike men charged towards the Company troops. The muskets did not go off in the damp weather. The rebels took possession of the gun from the enemy. The company troops, more intent on seizing the ordinance than harming the defenders of it, wounded only eight of them. The rebels were pushing off with their prize, the gun, as far as fast as the wet cotton soild ground would permit, when a relief expedition appearing, the British troops succeeded in rescuing the canon. As the rain ceased, the rebels poured out a multitude equipped with fire arms, but being confronted with similar party from the British camp, a general engagement ensued. After about an hour’s fighting, both the groups retired with no great casualties on either side. In the night about 9’o’ Clock, the troops of the Company were roused by another thunderstorm. A general attack with pikes was anticipated in every past of the like but to its relief the weather cleared up.

In the war strategy Umaithurai was much noted and dreaded. The period of blockade was marked by a series of daring exploits, designed and executed by him. One evening Potti Pakada and Gidivetti Nayak, disguised as mendicants and claiming as coming from Kasi, approached the British camp begging for alms.They entertained the weary troops by songs, dance and magic.The incantation worked as it was expected. Greatly impressed, the spectators persuaded them to continue the thrilling performance. A drizzle came together with darkness. Taking full advantage, Umaithurai with fifty of his select men stealthily entered the camp and launched a murderous attack. After many of the soldiers were killed, the assailants made their escape. This adventure added to the fury of the struggle. The clashes and exchange of fire continued upto 22, May, after which the situation took a decidedly more violent turn.

The Second Battle of Panchalamkurichi

As ordered by Edward Clive, the Governor of the Madras Presidency, troops from Fort St. George, St.Thomas Mount,Malabar, Arcot, Dindigul and Tiruchirappalli poured

into the southern provinces. A grant army assembled at Kovilpatti. Lieutenant Colonel Agnew, the Adjutant-General, reputed for his gallantry and local knowledge was directed to command the operations.On 22, May, the forces of Agnew encamped at Panchalamkurichi. The next day, the King's seventy seventh regiment led by Col. Spry, a Company of artilery under Captain Sir John Sinclair, and three companies of the first battalion of the thirteenth regiment under Captain Townsend joined the camp. Subsequently, the first regiment of Right cavalry under Captain J. Doveton and the Malay Corps under Captain Whitley re-inforced the enemy.

On 23, May 1801, this formidable army moved on the defiant citadel. The fifty three day old blockade ended and the siege began. On 24, May, a breach in the south west of the bastion was effected. Col. Agnew advanced his forces into the breach. To the astonishment of the assailants, notwithstanding the formidable - array - with the entire army ready to go into action in support of the advance columns, the gallant patriots commanded by the Umaithurai decided to fight out the issue and threw themselves into a deadly fray. Equipped with muskets and pikes, they swarmed over the besieging forces.

Thronging on the mud works parties kept up a galling fire on the storming detachments, while a phalany, animated with vigour sailed forth from the broken bastions, engaging the assailants in grim hand to hand fighting. In the dreadful carnage that followed both the parties suffered grievously. Eventually, fire power trumphed over sheer gallantry. Despite the heavy toll of life taken by the dreadly fire, the rebels continued their fierce reinstance till the last of all those who gathered on the breach fell. The British forces surmounted the breach and stormed the fort with a loss of 600 men.

Shortly, after the fatal moment, the survivors in the rebel garrison, 3000 in number who included many women and children assembled on the eastern face of the fallen fort. All rushed swiftly in eastern and northern directions. No sooner had they got clear of the fort, than they formed into two solid columns and thus, retreated, but best not dismayed. They moved rapidly towards Sivagangai. The British cavalry supported by the Sepoys of Ettayapuram and Pudukkottai, chased and charged the fleeing columns. They attacked the parties in their flank and rear and cut down 600 in a series of engagements. The forces which took possessions of the fort found the bodies of 450 insurgents living lethered about.

A total of 1050 patriots died in the battle of Panchalamkurichi within the breach and outside the walls. Away from the east face of the fort, the bodies of rebels who were killed in former actions were found disposed. Numerous armed men, taken as prisoners were beheaded near the fort on 24, May 1801 at the orders of Agnew. On charges of carrying arms and supplying grain to rebels, ten more inhabitants were executed. So terrible indeed was the disaster that it badly shattered the rebel power of resistance in Thoothukudi.

The fall of the stronghold rendered the rebel position very vulnerable. Soon after the dismall timing reached them, the patriots quit their barriers which they had erected with laborious effort on the Vallanadu Hills and abandoned Thoothukudi, Kadalgudi and seven other posts. Their plan to storm Tirunelveli too fell through. Great body of the patriots divided into groups, moved northwards and joined Maruthu brothers in Sivagangai. The rest, hurt by the British forces, fled to different villages and hills of the south and west.

Maruthu's Reception of Umaithurai

The cavalry of the enemy in pursuit of the fleeing rebels engaged them in more battles. One of the insurgent parties took its stand near a village and fought a pitched battle but was routed. Most of the group fell wounded and dead. In the evening of the day of battle, induced by the sullen quiet that followed the courage of the women of the village hurried to the blood stained field. Eager to afford relief and succour, they made a close search for the persons who are still alive. Among the heaps of the slaughtered, they discovered the son of one of the women still breathing, strack by agony, they gently raised his head. To their dismay the dying young man rallied the energy that still remained at his command and whispered into the ears of his mother, "Oh, mother, let me die, but try to save the life of Swami who lies near me" ('Swamy was Umaithurai). Rising to the melancholy occasion, the mother hurried to comply with the wishes of the dying son. Soon the women discovered Umaithurai weltering in his blood but, alive. With the same motherly tenderness, they quickly lifted him and carried him off to the village. They dressed his wounds and attended on him with solicitude but, were greatly scared at the sudden appearance of the sepoy of Ettayapuram, chasing the rebel groups. At this critical moment, an ingenious device dawned in their minds. They covered Umaithurai with a piece of cloth lamentation. On the approach of the enemy's troops, they told them that just then a young man died of small pox. The traitors taken by panic, suddenly fled, without costing a glance behind.

Umaithurai had been afflicted with six desperate wounds. Yet on the third day, it seemed certain that he was out of danger. On 28, May, with his wounds still unhealed, he reached Kamudhi. Maruthu Pandyan accompanied by a large group of people, reached Kamudhi and affectionately welcomed the hero who returned from the fallen fortress into his camp. Taking Umaiuthrai to his headquarters at Siruvayal, he attended on him with the greatest care. The villagers even from the remote places visited their gallant leader and gave him presents. The women of the town collected sundry articles, distributed them among the poor and made offerings to the deities for the quick recovery of the afflicted leader. In the meanwhile, Sevethiah who escaped from Panchalamkurichi joined hands with Maruthu Pandiyars.

The patriotic efforts of the South Indian leaders Maruthu Pandiyars of Siruvayal Umaithurai and Sevethiah of Panchalamkurichi, Melappan of Ramanathapuram, Karutha Thambi, Sevetha Thambi, Sivagnanam, Duraisamy, Muthusamy Woodiannan Moolikutty Thambi and Vengam Periya Wodaya Thevar of Sivaganga, Bommi Nayak of Veerapur, Melappan of Ramnad, Gopal Nayak of Dindigul and a host of others to oust the alien rule from their motherland by an armed rebellion failed. The advanced British artillary, and the non-cooperation of some of the Palayakkars with the leaders of the rebellion contributed to the failure of the rebellion. Agnew, the British Commandant announced cash award for those who handed over the leaders to him dead or alive.

On 19, October, 1801, Maruthu Pandyan was wounded and captured at Cholapuram. Karuthiah Thambi and Moolikutti Thambi, the sons of Vellai Maruthu were also captured in Kalayar koil jungles. Sevethiah who fled to this country from Dindigul was captured in Srivilliputhur. Other leaders secured by the British were Muthu Vella Nayak, the son of Gopal Nayak of Dindigul, Muthu Vira, the associate of Gopal Nayak, Tomachi Mudali, the rebell emissary who served in the camp of Dhoondaji Waug and others. The Governor of Madras Presidency directed Agnew to conduct an immediate trial and to punish the rebel leaders.

The English carried into effect by a summary process the execution of the patriots, normally at the centres of their activity. The leaders, who were hanged to death at different places in Dindigul in November 1801 included Gopal Nayak, the Palayakar of Jathipatti and Muthuvella Nayak.On 3, December, Innes the British Captain who led his army against Sivaganga condemned fifteen more of the leaders of Dindigul to death and six for banishment.Gnanamuthu and Veerappan two rebels of note of Thanjavur were sentenced to be tortured.Sivagnanam was executed at Komeri (Kamudhi) and Wodiannan at Tiruchuzhi. Several insurgents, notably Setupathi, the headman of Kallarnadu and Kanaka Sabapathi thevar, a chief of Ramanathapuram were hanged to death at Abiraman. Kusalaveera kunja Nayak of Kadalkudi was executed on 12, October, 1801. Melappan was declared a freefooter and sent to gallows. Shanmugapathi the leader of the Kallar tribe was put to death in Kallarnadu.

On 24, October, 1801, Vella Maruthu, Chinna Maruthu, Shevata Thambi, his son Muthusamy, and Muthu Karkuppa thevar together with a large number of other patriots were executed on the ruins of the old fort of Tiruppattur. Sevethiah and Umaithurai were executed on the tower erected before the once much dreaded fort of Panchalamkurichi on 16, November, 1801. James Welsh observes on Umaithurai that,.....'poor oomee (Umaithurai) too graced the gallows in reward for the most disinterested and purest patriotism'. The leaders who escaped the gallows were banished by the British administration. About

seventy three leaders who participated in the rebellion were banished among whom were the sons of Maruthu Pandyan, Dalawai Kumarasamy Nayak of Panchalamkkurichi, Chinna Madan of Pasuvanthanai, Pedda Nayak who commanded the rebels, in Thoothukudi and his son, Krishnappa Nayak.

Early in February 1802, the East India Company Government sent all the seventy three prisoners sentenced for banishment, to Thoothukudi and placed them under the military custory of James Welsh. Admiral Nelson, the ship commissioned for the transport of the prisoners, anchored off the coast. The prisoners boarded the ship and left their motherland for ever for their unknown destination on 11, February 1802. What James Welsh has indicated as the silent reaction of Doraiswamy, the favourite son of Maruthu Pandyan and the young boy of hardly fifteen years, reflected the sentiments of all the patriots at their eternal departure from the land, in defence of which they fought, so valiantly.

He narrates, With a mild and dignified resignation, this amiable young man bore his cruel fate without a murmur but such was the melancholy expression in his fine countenance that it was impossible to see and commiserate him..... I still seem to see the combination of affection and despair, which marked the fine countenance of my young friend Doraiswamy, as I handed him into the boat and the manly and silent misery, which his companions in affliction displayed on quiting their dear native land for ever 'With the banishment', James Welsh concluded, ended the most harrassing warfare in which the expenditure of life had been profuse'.James Welsh was impartial enough to record that the result of the war was dishounarable to the English.

The fort of Panchalamkurichi was pulled down and levelled to the ground. The site was ploughed and cultivated so as to remove its popularity among the public. It was ordered also that the name of Panchalamkurichi removed from all maps and accounts. Notwithstanding this it found a place afterwards in the Ordnance Map where it appeared as Panjalamkurichi in ruins. The Palayakars of Ettayapuram, Maniyachi and Melmandai who remained loyal to the British during the warfare were rewarded. Thus, was suppressed the patriotic spirits of the south which began to re-erupt only a century later.

In July 1801, the Nawab of Carnatic ceded the territory to the English East India Company and the Company appointed Mr. Luzhington as the Collector. The Nawab also directed his Amildar at Tirunelveli to transfer his accounts to the Company Collector.

Vellore Fort

A painting showing sepoys from the Madras Army in the early 1800s

THE VELLORE MUTINY,1806

[Extracts from "A Manual of the North Arcot in the Presidency of Madras", compiled by Arthur F.Cox, M.C.S., Assistant Collector and Magistrate, North Arcot District published in the Year 1881 A.D.,]

Within little more than a year after the pacification of the Chittoor Paliems the peace of the district was again disturbed by the Vellore mutiny. After the fall of Seringapatnam Tippu's twelve sons and six daughters had been removed to Vellore. The fort, from the strength of its walls and the voracity of the alligators, with which its capacious ditch was filled, had been deemed a suitable place for their confinement. Two of the sons were married, having their families residing with them, and the whole party, including servants, amounted to several hundred persons. The liberality of Government had supplied them with a suitable residence, the privacy of which was undisturbed save by the casual visit of the officer commanding the garrison.

Vellore was at this time garrisoned by four companies of Her Majesty's 69th Regiment, a few invalid artillerymen, and a battalion of the 1st Regiment, with another of the 23rd Regiment, of Native Infantry. While the number of the native troops was upwards of 1,500, the Europeans were only about 370 strong. The officers resided some in the cantonment, others in bungalows within the fort.

Early in 1806 it was generally known to the officers that a spirit of dissatisfaction prevailed among some at least of the native troops. Mahommedan fakirs had been observed wandering about the country in unusual numbers, and the sepoys had more than once shown signs of discontent. Sir John Craddock, recently appointed Commissioner-in-Chief of the Madras army, had imprudently issued several new regulations calculated to offend the prejudices of the sepoys. Hindus were forbidden to appear on parade wearing earrings or bearing upon their foreheads the marks distinctive of their sect. Mussalmans were ordered to shave their beards and trim their moustaches in a particular manner. But the most powerful exciting cause of disaffection was the introduction of a new leather head dress, supposed to bear some distant resemblance to the European topee, and a new turnscrew formed in the shape of a cross, and ordered to be worn next to the heart. Advantage was seized of these annoying innovations by the emissaries of the Mysore party, who began to instill into the minds of the native garrison a suspicion that the English intended to force them to adopt the Christian religion. Early in May it was reported to Madras that disaffection had openly appeared and that one battalion, the second of the 4th Regiment, had broken out into mutiny, refusing to wear the new head dress. The Commander-in-

Chief at once visited the station and a court of enquiry was held. Some of the sepoys were found guilty and sentenced to receive from 500 to 900 lashes, but these punishments were remitted upon the public submission of the culprits. The mutinous battalion was removed, and its place supplied by another from the 23rd Regiment.

Discontent however still hung about the garrison, secret associations were formed, and meetings held in which the Mysore emissaries did their utmost to excite the sepoys to rebellion. Most of this was known not only to the people in the bazaars, but to the officers themselves. A Mahommedan fakir for many days walked publicly about the town announcing the approaching destruction of the English; but little regard seems to have been paid to these warning signs. No European reinforcement was applied for, and no checks imposed upon the dangerous intercourse between the Mysore party and the native troops.

On June 17th an event occurred which should have roused the officers from their feelings of false security. A sepoy of the 1st Regiment, named Mustapha Beg, secretly informed his commanding officer, Colonel Forbes, that a plot had been planned for the extermination of the European officers and troops. Colonel Forbes not only disbelieved in the imputed treachery of his men, but referred the matter for enquiry to the native officers of the regiment. These being themselves leaders in the conspiracy, pronounced Mustapha Beg's story to be placed for some time in confinement. The faithful sepoy was subsequently rewarded by the present of 7,000 rupees and a subadar's pension.

(It was alleged by some that Mustapha Beg was one of the chief instigators of the mutiny. The reward bestowed on him caused the greatest dissatisfaction to the rest of the sepoys.)

On July 9th the European garrison retired to rest in fancied security, though a warning had on that very day been given of what was about to occur. A European officer had been grossly insulted on the parade ground by a sepoy, and an ominous feeling of general expectancy was observed among the native troops. The outbreak, which took place before the morning, appears however to have been premature. The combination of adherents of the family of Hyder and others from Mysore with the neighbouring disaffected Poligars had not been matured, and the plan of the mutiny was thus destroyed. The treachery of Mustapha Beg seems to have aroused the fear of his co-religionists, and to have led them to hasten the execution of their schemes.

An opportunity was afforded by the appointment of a field day for the battalion of the 23rd Regime early in the morning of July 10th. On such occasions sepoys were accustomed to sleep within the fort in order that they might be ready to get under arms at an early hour.

The battalion of the 1st Regiment, among whom were the chief conspirators, furnished guards upon the night in question, and the Mahommedan native adjutant contrived to post as many of his own faith as possible on this duty within the fort. Other accomplices of the 1st Regiment made various excuses for spending the night within the walls.

At 4' O clock in the morning the alarm was first raised. At that hour the battalion of the 23rd had been drawn up on the parade ground under the orders of their native officers, and ball cartridge was served out as though for target practice. While these preparations were being made, a band of the mutineers was silently marched down to the main guard, which was chiefly composed of Europeans. The native sepoys of the 1st Regiment on gurard there had prepared themselves with loaded muskets, and upon the arrival of the party from the 23rd Regiment in support, turned upon their unsuspecting European comrades and despatched them. This done, part of the mutineers ran to the regiment on parade, and announced, with affected surprise and alarm, that the English were killing all the natives they came across. The greater part of the 23rd Regiment was composed of Hindus, who, there is reason to suppose, were not parties to the conspiracy. Hearing the alarming news brought from the main gurard, they allowed themselves to be marched to the European barracks (now the Civil Dispensary) and to be drawn up around the building. There, under orders of their native officers, they poured in volley after volley upon the defenceless and sleeping soldiers, who, half-clothed, and without means of retaliation, crounched behind pillars or the scanty furniture which their quarters contained.

Meanwhile all posts of importance, including the powder magazine and pagoda, which was used as an arsenal, were secured by parties of the 1st Regiment, while a select band set out on the errand of massacring the European officers. Colonel Fancourt, who commanded the garrison, was their first victim. Aroused by firing at the main guard, which was close to his house (now occupied by the Sub-Collector), he hastily ran out in his dressing-gown to inquire the cause. He was shot at his own door, and survived but a few hours. Colonel McKerras, of the 23rd Regiment, was brought down on the parade-ground as he hurried to the barracks of his regiment. Major Armstrong was passing outside the fort in a palanquin when he heard the sound of fire-arms. A lighting he advanced to the crest of the glacis and asked what the firing meant. The answer was a volley fired by some mutineers on the ramparts, which killed him on the spot. About a dozen other officers were killed unarmed in their houses with their wives and children, some even in their beds.

(Kaye says that the ladies were spared, the Mysore princess promising to hand them over to the leaders of the mutiny after the English were exterminated.)

A few hair-breadth escapes occurred. One officer concealed himself under his bed, hidden by a bolster from the sight of the rebels, who were searching the room. Others had sufficient warning to elude the mutineers, and a few of these collected in a house near a

corner of the European barracks, where they lay hid until the sepoys had begun to disperse for plunder. The fire having slackened they made a dash for the barracks and broke their way in through its windows. The building was found strewn with the dead, dying and wounded, for the fire of the rebels had proved most destructive. Having possession of the magazine, continuous supplies of ammunition had been served out to them, and two pieces of cannon being found in the arsenal ready mounted, had been brought to an unoccupied barrack, directly in front of that of the 69th, on which they opened fire. In all this they were assisted by dependants of the Mysore family, Tippu's second son, Futteh Hyder, personally encouraging the rebels.

Recovering from their first surprise, the soldiers had made a gallant defence. Though without officers, they were rallied by some of their sergeants, took possession of the barrack gateway, and made several fruitless sallies with the bayonet. But for the determination thus displayed the rebels would have forced the gate and despatched the whole number in the building. Many instances of individual bravery are on record. One of the most signal was that displayed by a soldier posted as sentry over the magazine. An officer who ran past him, pacing up and down with the utmost composure, inquired whether he knew that the sepoys were murdering the Europeans. "I thought as much." he replied. "Why don't you fly for your life?" exclaimed the officer. "I was posted here," he said, "and it is my duty to stay. I've six rounds in my pouch, and I'll sell my life dearly." The noble fellow was afterwards found dead at his post.

Captain Blakiston's "Military Adventures under Wellington."

Of upwards of 300 men who had been in the barracks, not more than 150 were able to join the officers in breaking out of the building and making for the ramparts close by. Here they were shortly joined by three more officers, including Captain Barrow of the 69th, who took command of the gallant band. An attempt to gain possession of the magazine having failed, they forced their way to the cavalier at the north-east angle of the fort, and, dislodging the sepoys who occupied it, took possession. In this struggle Captain Barrow and other officers were disabled. Leaving a party to guard the wounded and hold the cavalier, the main body still fought its way along the ramparts until it reached the top of the fort gateway, where, sheltered by the bastion wall and some neighbouring bungalows, Sergeant Brodie and a small European guard had maintained their post for several hours, all their officers having fallen.

Fastened to the wall near this part of the fort, a rope was found which had been used to admit some of the mutineers from without. The officers after some consideration deemed it prudent to make use of this mode of egress to escape from the fort, but they could not

persuade many of the men to accompany them. With a few they descended, and made their way to the fort on Sayer's Hill, on the other side of the town, of which they took possession. Some hundred men remained bravely at the post of danger and in default of combatant officers, placed themselves under the command of two young Surgeons named Jones and Dean. To the resolution and untiring energy of these two young men it is chiefly due that the fort was not given upt to the rebels.

While these events were progressing, the leaders of the mutiny were acting as though already in secure possession of the fortress. Proceeding to the mahals they proclaimed Futteh Hyder as rajah in the open square of the buildings. The Mysore flag, bearing tiger's stripes upon a green field, was produced, and being hoisted on the fort flagstaff, was nailed to it. Perceiving this, Messrs. Jones and Dean, taking about sixty of the men under them, forced their way to the flagstaff, where one of the 69th under took the perilous duty of climbing the pole and unfastening the flag. He accomplished his errand in safety, and brought the flag down in triumph.

At this juncture succour arrived. Major Cootes, an officer of one of the native regiments, who happened to live without the fort, started as soon as the alarm was raised, and rode post-haste to the large cavalry station of Ranipet, 14 miles distant. At about 7 a.m. information was given by him to Colonel Gillespie, who commanded Her Majesty's 19th Dragoons, and was an old friend of Colonel Fancourt. He was to have spent the previous evening at Vellore, and to have slept at Colonel Fancourt's house on the fatal night, but urgent business had detained him, and when Colonel Cootes arrived he was about to start for Vellore, intending to breakfast with the Fancourts. On hearing the sad news, he at once started with a squadron of his own corps and a troop of the 7th Native Cavalry, leaving orders for the rest of the cavalry to follow with the galloper guns attached to the 19th Dragoons. He reached the Vellore fort shortly after 9 a.m.

The entrance to the fort was guarded by four massive gates. Of these the two outer were closed, and the two inner open. On Colonel Gillespie's arrival a few men of the 69th were lowered into the space between the two closed gates, and unfastened the bolts of the outermost. As every effort to force the inner one proved fruitless, the Colonel caused himself to be drawn up to the ramparts by the rope already referred to, and infused new courage into the defenders by his example. Though still without ammunition, repeated attacks from the rebels were repelled by charges with the bayonet. At about 10 a.m. reinforcements of cavalry arrived, escorting the galloper guns. One of these was applied to the gate, which flew open at the first discharge. It was then arranged that Colonel Gillespie with the remains of the 69th should descend from the ramparts into the fort, while the cavalry, after giving them a fair start, should dash in through the gateway.

The 69th were met by a severe cross fire, and were falling back, when the dragoons galloped in sword in hand. Colonel Gillespie was himself ridden over in the charge and considerably bruised. Dispersing the sepoys in the neighbourhood of the gate, the squadron formed in line on the parade ground, and pursued the now flying rebels, who were making their way towards the narrow passage of escape afforded by the sally port. Numbers were cut down while thus in retreat, and many others despatched upon the glacis by a troop of dragoons and some native horse sent round to intercept the fugitives. The native cavalry had throughout nobly co-operated with their European comrades. No quarter was given. All the buildings in the fort were explored and mutineers found in them pitilessly slaughtered. A considerable number had taken possession of the deserted European barracks, from whence they fired on all who passed. A party of dragoons and Governor's Body Guard dismounted, entered the building, and despatched those within. The sickening sight of the mutilated bodies of the Europeans here, and of the sick of the 69th, who had been dragged from the regimental hospital and butchered in front of the mahal gates, excited the most lively feelings of resentment, and the men clamoured to be allowed to enter the building and revenge themselves on the princely instigators of the plot; but Colonel Gillespie held them back. Upwards of a hundred rebel sepoys who had sought refuge in the mahals were however brought out, and being placed under a wall, were fired at with cannister from the guns. The total number of mutineers who were killed was very great, eight hundred being found dead in the fort alone. The refugees were mostly captured by the police in neighbouring villages, and no less than six hundred were in irons at Vellore and Trichinopoly at one time for their share in the proceedings. A few of these were allowed to serve in other regiments, but most were discharged from the service. Three native officers and fourteen non-commissioned officers and privates were condemned to death at Vellore. Some were hung, some shot, and some blown from the guns. The last mode of execution produced the profoundest impression. A spectator describes how numbers of kites accompanied the party to the place of execution, "flapping their wings and screeching as if in anticipation of the bloody feast, till the fatal flash which scattered the fragments of bodies in the air, when, pouncing on their prey, they caught in their talons many pieces of quivering flesh before they could reach the ground. At sight of this the native troops employed on this duty, together with the crowd assembled to witness the execution, set up a yell of horror."

Thus ended the Vellore mutiny. The immediate object of the sepoys was to massacre all the Europeans, and to seize the fort in the name of the Mysore family. Their ulterior motives are not certainly known, but Lord William Bentinck, the Governor of Madras, in his General Order on the subject, referred to "the extent of the plans which are ascertained to have been connected with the insurrection," which, after careful enquiry, "there was

every reason to believe was excited by interested persons and was fostered by the deepest intrigue, in which the native army of this presidency had no part, with the exception of the two battalions composing the unhappy garrison.” The general impression was, however, that the disaffection was widespread among the Mahommedan sepoys of the army, and that, had the mutiny been successful, there would have been a general rising. “No one knew,” writes one who took part in the recapture of the fortress, “how deeply rooted or extensive might have been the plot. The English seemed to stand as it were on a volcano, one eruption of which had been experienced, and which might be succeeded by others, they knew not how soon. Indeed, it was a considerable time before this feeling subsided.

In consequence of the revolt the family of Tippu was removed to Calcutta, and the Governor, with the Commander-in-Chief of Madras, were summarily recalled to England.

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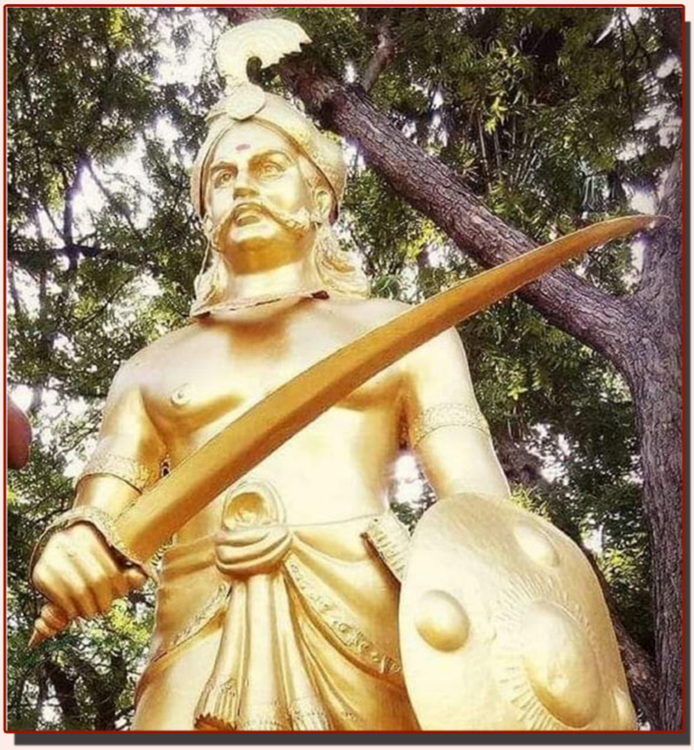
TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH RECORDS RELATED TO INDIAN INDEPENDENCE EVENTS

Sl. No.	G.O. / Document reference	Related to
1	Madurai District Collectorate Records, Vol.1126, 20 August 1799, p.163.	Early challenges to British Rule
2	Madurai District Collectorate Records, Vol.1126, 20 August 1799, pp 70-83. & p.9	Report on Poligars
3	District Collectorate Records, dated 28 May 1902, p.35.	Suppression of rebels
4	CID Report Vol.I part III, Sept. 1907 to August 1908, Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.38, p.177	Famine between 1750 and 1850
5	Letter No.712, Revenue, 11 August 1902.	Famine between 1750 and 1850
6	The Sedition Committee Report 1918, p.13	Rise of Extremism in Tamil Nadu
7	Lr.No.425, Public (Conf.), 7 June 1905,	Reports about V.O.C. and Bharathi
8	G.O.515, Public (Conf.), 1 July 1907.	Moderate-Extremist Rift in
9	Madras Secret Police Abstracts of Intelligence 1906, Vol.XIX, Para 58, p.52.	Tamil Nadu
10	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.35, p4	Swadeshi Steam Company, Tuticorin.
11	Public Miscellaneous Vol.II, No.1A	Telugu translation of Bipin Chandra Pal's speech
12	Lr.No.8, Judicial (Conf.), 21 November 1907	Bipin Chandra Pal's arrival at Madras.

13	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.1A, p.10.	Bipin Chandra Pal's speeches
14	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.1, Vol.II & III, pp.1-13.	Bipin Chandra Pal's speeches
15	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.1, Vol.IV, pp.1--14.	Bipin Chandra Pal's speeches
16	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.1, Vol.V, pp.1-11.	Bipin Chandra Pal's speeches
17	Confidential Disposal No.144A, Judicial, dated 22 July 1908.	Bipin Chandra Pal's speeches
18	G.O.205-206, Judicial, 24 May, 1877.	Bipin Chandra Pal's visit to Thanjavur.
	G.O.205-206, Judicial, 24 May, 1877.	Burial of N.K.Ramsamy's father at Nagapattinam.
19	Madras Secret Police Abstracts of Intelligence 1910, Vol.XXIII, Para 2121, p.705.	Investment of Pandithurai Thevar to the Swadeshi Steam Company.
20	G.O.No.50, Judicial (Conf.), 9 January 1908	Congress split of 1907.
21	Madras Secret Police Abstracts of Intelligence 1908, Para 74, p.35. & Para 310, pp.179-180	Formation of Chennnai Jana Sangam by Extremist Leaders

22	Unrest File, Vol.I, p.181 & Vol.II, Part I, pp.133-134	Speeches of G.S. Iyer & Nationalist songs of Bharathiar
23	Confidential Disposal No.62, Judicial, 30 March, 1908.	Free distribution of Bharathi pamphlets by V.Krishnasami Iyer.
24	Confidential Disposal No.255, Judicial, 8 October, 1908.	Songs Vandemataram Kummigal published
25	D.O. (Conf.) dated 6 October, 1908 from the Chief Secretary of Madras to the District Magistrates of Thanjavur and South Arcot.	Demanding action against the writers and publishers of pamphlets
26	MSPAI 1908, Para 215, p.122	Swadeshi Lectures
27	MSPAI 1908, 156, p.97	Comments of District Superintendent of Police, Salem on Krishnasami Sarma lectures.
28	Confidential Disposal No.42, Judicial, 6 Feb. 1908. Confidential Disposal No.111, Judicial, 6 Junde 1908.G.O.1074, Judicial (Conf.), 16 July 1910.	Swadeshi movements in Andhra Pradesh.
29	Confidential Disposal No.161, Judicial, 4 August, 1909. MSPAI 1908, Para 184, p.112, Para 327, p.190	Propaganda through Swadeshi gold coins.
30	CID Report, Vol.IV, November to December 1908, p.216.	Production of Swadeshi Cloth
31	CID Report, Vol.I, Part II, September 1907 to August 1908, p.66.MSPAI 1908, Para 197, p.116.CID Report, 1907, p.64	Promoting Swadeshi goods.

32	CID Report, September 1907 to August 1908, Vol-I, Part II, p.8, 17.	
33	G.O.1087, Judicial, 8 August, 1908.	The Coral Mills Strike
34	MSPAI 1908, Para 297, p.169.	
35	G.O.53, Education, 22 January, 1911 MSPAI 1908, Para 948, p.523. MSPAI 1908, Para 948, p.523. Confidential Disposal No.144A, Judicial, 22 September, 1908. Student and Teachers participation.	
36	G.O.522, Marine, 6 November 1906. G.O.546, Marine, 23 November, 1906.	Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company of V.O.C.
37	G.O.1542, Judicial (Conf.), 3 October, 1911.	History sheet of Subramaniam Siva
38	G.O.103, Judicial (Conf.), 25 January, 1909.	Role of Tirunelveli Vakils
39	MSPAI 1908, Para 528, p.313	Public speeches of Gurunatha Iyer, Police Constable.
40	G.O.467, Judicial, 22 March, 1908.	Release of VOC and Siva on bail and counter measures
41	G.O.231, Judicial, 16 February 1909. G.O.760, Judicial, 9 June 1909. G.O.1390, Judicial, 14 October 1909.	VOC - Harassment in Prison

42	G.O.1010, Judicial, (Conf.) 4 July 1910. G.O.794, Judicial (Conf.), 12 May, 1911.	Pondicherry as a Revolutionary Centre.
43	CID Report, Vol.III, August to November 1908, p.119, Madras Secret Police Abstracts of Intelligence, 1908, pp.34, 55, 211, 229, 267-8 Confidential Disposal No.144A, Judicial, 22 July 1908. G.O.1286, Judicial (Conf.), 14 August 1912. MSPAI, 1910, para 821, p.268.	Sanyasins, Neelakanda Bramm-achari, Bharatha Matha Association, Aurobindo Ghosh.
44	G.O.651, Public (Confl.), 4 August, 1904 Confidential Disposal No.144A, Judicial, 22 July, 1908.	Attitude of Ashe towards Indian Head Clerk and subordinates.
45	Tinneveli Cases (C.S.S. Strictly Conf.), P.M.B. No.43.	Letter from Vanchi to his father dated 8 June, 1910.
46	G.O.1112-12, Judicial, (Conf.), 8 July, 1911.	Report submitted by A.R.Cox, Sub-Collector , Tirunelveli to the Chief Secretary, Madras on Ashe Murder.
47	Public Miscellaneous Bundle No.42, p.135.	Evidence in the Tinnevelly Conspiracy Case.
48	G.O.1418, Judicial, (Conf.),7 September 1911. G.O.No.1014, Judicial (Conf.), 24 June, 1912.	Three suspects escaped police net, two committed suicide, in Ashe Murder Case.
49	G.O.474-75, Judicial (Conf.), 23 March, 1912	Details of accused persons in Ashe Murder Case.